Christmas Traditions - Michele

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Holiday Custom

Informant:
Michele Hepner was born in Kaysville, Utah. She moved to Logan with her parents and two sisters when she was 13 years old to be closer to her mother's side of the family. When she was 19 year old she met the love of her life, Steven Hepner, and they have been married for 24 years. They have 3 daughters, including me, and 1 son. Michele has worked in the Mother Baby unit at the Intermountain Healthcare hospital for 20 years.

Context:
Michele spent Christmas in a few different places through the whole Christmas season. Whether it was her great uncle's house, her great aunt’s house, or her grandparents house. Although she lived in Kaysville, Michele and her family spent the holidays here in Cache Valley with her extended family on her mother's side.

Text:
Christmas is my absolute favorite holiday. As a kid my grandpa would close down main street in Hyrum and line the shoulder of the road with straw bales to go sledding. We did that for years before the state started plowing the roads. After that we would go sledding down Old Main Hill at Utah State or we would go on the hill right above Millville Cemetery. On Christmas Eve, we would drive from our house in Kaysville to grandpa’s house in Logan then back home that night.

My dad worked for the state plowing roads so on Christmas morning he would wake us up around four or five in the morning to open Christmas presents before he had to leave. My mom used to get so mad at him. One year my dad got a police scanner for Christmas. I remember him saying “this is so cool, thanks Santa” and right after he thanked Santa we heard someone go “ho,
ho, ho” across the scanner. That is when we started to believe Santa could hear us over the scanner. After we finished opening our Christmas presents we would drive back to Cache Valley and open presents in Nibley with grandma and grandpa before going to my great uncle’s house in Millville. At his house we would exchange gifts with the cousin whose name we drew on Thanksgiving then we would have dinner. My great aunt would also have a party every year between the tenth and the fifteenth. She used to have this big flat bed sleigh that she would hook her horses or her tractor up to. She would put straw bales and blanks on the trailer to keep us all warm. Then we would drive through the streets of Millville and look at the lights and go caroling. We we were done, or if it got too cold, we would go back to her house for hot chocolate and cookies and wait for Santa and Mrs. Claus to come with a present. I remember a time when I was around seven or eight years old. Our house used to have a fireplace in the living room with a great big mantel, a huge mirror that my mom put above it, and a red strip of concrete in front of it. For Christmas my mom would put twinkle lights around the mirror and build a great big fire in the fireplace. I remember laying on the strip of concrete and it feeling so good because the concrete was so cold and the fire was so hot. I would just lay there and watch the twinkle lights around the mirror or, on those rare occasions, watch Frosty the Snowman on T.V. My favorite thing about Christmas is having our presents wrapped under the tree because my mom would tell us that Sant never wrapped her presents and Santa always had different wrapping paper from my mom. My favorite Christmas present I got was a cradle for my baby doll that was made by hand by my grandpa. We never had a lot of money but you would never know it at Christmas time. Grandpa would make us toys and we had a neighbor who would make us barbie and doll clothes.
You could tell Christmas is Michele’s favorite holiday just by listening to her talk about it. She doesn’t have any bad memories about it and is appreciative of everything her family does. Her favorite gifts were the ones made by hand, not the ones you buy at a store. She truly embraces the saying that the best gifts are the ones made from love and not bought.