Fall 11-22-2018

Christmas Traditions - Trudy

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“Christmas Traditions”

Holiday Custom

Informant:
Trudy Byington is a mother of 3 daughters and 1 son. She is a grandmother to 11 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Trudy is also a sister to two younger brothers. She grew up in Nibley, Utah and graduated Sky View High School. Trudy has been married to the love of her life for 50 years this coming December. She works as the head cafeteria worker at South Cache Middle School and will soon be retiring. Trudy was raised on a dairy farm as was expected to be out helping milk the cattle every morning before school and every night before dinner.

Context:
Trudy has spent Christmas at her Grandparents houses in Millville, Utah for most of her childhood. Every year she would switch off spending the holiday with her dads parents or her moms parents Trudy would spend the holiday with not only her immediate family, but her extended family as well. Only as her family got bigger would the location change. Trudy told me this story in her kitchen on Thanksgiving Day.

Text:
Growing up we would go to my great grandpa’s house for Christmas and Christmas Eve. Every year there was about 100 people who would come and we would put everyone's name in a hat. Whoever's name you pulled out, you would have to buy a gift for them and give it to them when the family got together on Christmas afternoon. On Christmas Eve Santa Clause would come to my great grandpa’s house and brought a present, an orange, and a candy cane for all us kids. Before he came we would have ham and mashed potatoes and gravy for dinner and grandma would always fix a plate for Santa to eat before he left. Christmas Eve was just a day to spend with family, there wasn’t really a plan for how to spend the night. The guys normally had a mixed drink and played Poker or Pinochle while the kids played Chinese Checkers and the
women baked. When the men were done with the poker chips us kids would take them and build houses and barns out of them. My grandma used to have an apple orchard at her house and she use to sit for hours and find the prettiest apples for us grandkids for Christmas. For Christmas we always made homemade dipped chocolates with a cream filling, one grandma would make a raisin cake and my other grandma would make a fruit cake with gumdrops in it then soaked it in rum. I liked them both but the raisin cake was my favorite. My grandma would also make suet pudding (bread crumbs, spices, and suet which is the good fat off beef cattle) with a caramel sauce that had whiskey in it. I do not put the whiskey in my caramel sauce because I think it tastes nasty. When we got home on Christmas Eve we would put out of stockings which was one of my dads clean socks. Me and my little brother would fight about who got to put their sock on the couch and who had to put it on the chair because if your sock was on the couch you got more presents. In our stockings we got an orange in the bottom of our sock with some hard tack candy thrown in with it. Our Christmas presents were never wrapped and were never under the tree because my parents told us “Santa doesn’t have time for that kind of nonsense.” We were not allowed to see our presents until grandma and grandpa got to our house. They would go to everyone’s houses to see the grandkids open their presents and that was a lot of houses because my mom had five other siblings. Then, at noon, we would go back to my great grandpa’s house to exchange gifts for the names we drew and for lunch. Every Christmas night my dad would hook up a couple horses to an old wooden sleigh and give us rides up and down the street in Millville because the roads were never plowed back then. When we were done getting rides on the sleigh we would go to Merlin Olsen Park and go ice skating. One Christmas I told my dad I didn’t believe in Santa Clause and when I woke up that morning there were sleigh tracks on our
front lawn but there were no footprints. I still don’t know how he did that to this day. Some of the tradition I still do with my family are making the chocolate dipped candies and drawing names for Christmas although now we draw names for families instead of the person themselves. My favorite thing about Christmas is always watching the snowfall on Christmas. If it doesn’t snow on Christmas then it doesn’t feel like Christmas to me.

Texture:
Trudy had no problem remembering her Christmas traditions. You could tell by speaking with her that she cherishes every memory she has of Christmas time. As she was telling me of her traditions, she was with her family on Thanksgiving and was wondering how to incorporate some of those lost traditions into her family again.