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Thanksgiving Traditions - Michele

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Michele Hepner
Nibley, Utah
November 2018

“Thanksgiving Traditions”

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 has spent Thanksgiving at her Uncle Gary's house in Millville, Utah for most of her childhood. She 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. She told me this story in her living room by her fireplace.

Text:

When I was growing up my family would spend Thanksgiving at my Great Uncle Gary's house in Millville. Every year all the kids would sneak up to our cousins rooms that were in the attic of my Great Grandmas house and hide from uncle Gary. We thought it was funny when he would come and find us. In the attic there were some toy horses that we would always play with and when we looked out the window of the bedroom, we could see Millville Park. The stairs in the house were really steep and as kids we thought it was fun to play on them. All the adults would completely freak out because they thought we were going to fall and hurt ourselves and we thought it was funny. Every night before Thanksgiving I got to go with mom and help her and grandpa stuff the turkey. One year I asked grandpa how we knew if the turkey was a boy or a girl. He told me that they only killed the toms, the boy turkeys. I asked why the turkey couldn't

be a girl and grandpa told me that only the boy turkeys could be killed. I asked grandpa if I could name the turkey whatever I wanted and, because I was his favorite, he told me I could so I named the turkey Lizzie and when we had two turkeys I would name them Lizzie and Isabel. Every Thanksgiving we would have homemade pies. We had pumpkin, banana cream, lemon meringue, and cherry cream. All the women in my family knew how to make them and passed on the recipes to their children so they never had to have a store bought pie for Thanksgiving. We would also have homemade dipped candies, like the ones from the Bluebird Restaurant. See my great grandma used to work there dipping the candies to sell to people in the store. She passed on the recipe to her children and them to theirs. We have passed down this candy making tradition for four generations and when I pass it down to my kids it will make five generations. Thanksgiving has always been kept in the traditional way; turkey, mashed potatoes, corn, the usual stuff. It is important to my family to keep it that way because that is the way my great grandma liked it. We would always eat Thanksgiving dinner on grandma's best china and not have paper plates or cups. Grandma used to have a black walnut box lined with blue velvet that held her silverware made from real silver. The only time I ever saw that box was when it was Thanksgiving. My mom now has that box and we still only use that silverware on Thanksgiving. As our families got bigger we stopped going to my great uncle's house and started going to grandpa's house, kind of split up so there were smaller groups of people. We still do that now and about 13 years ago we split again and we stopped going to my grandma's house and started doing Thanksgiving at my mom's house. My favorite thing about Thanksgiving is having the extended family together and really close, almost like it was a reunion.

Texture:

Michele told this story with such cheer in her voice because you could tell she is close to her family and it is really important that she tells her children about their family history. I have never heard the full story of how my family celebrated Thanksgiving before I was born. Michele was eager for the interview to start when I spoke with her about this project. You could tell she feels great pride in sharing these stories.

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ENGL 2210
Professor Lynne S. McNeill
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