Christmas Eve Chowder and Julmust

Madeline Thomas
madeline.jane.thomas@aggiemail.usu.edu

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Holiday Custom

Informant: The informant was Megan Monson, an English Major at Utah State University. We met in our ENGL 2210 Intro to Folklore class. She writes grants as part of her job. She is part owner of a company that makes storage racks for winter sports equipment. She has three brothers and a dog names Mia. She and her family belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She hates Christmas music but likes Christmas traditions.

Context: This tradition was gathered as part of series as we walked from Ray B West to Huntsman hall across campus, through the snow, after Megan offered to help me with the collection project after figuring out how badly I procrastinated. I used my cellphone to record the audio as the video followed our feet through the snow. Even with all the people we walked past, Megan stayed remarkably focused on the interview. Important to the context of this tradition is the fact that Megan’s father served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Sweden. Additionally, Megan’s family has Swedish ancestry, continuing to explain where these traditions might have come from. Based on our interview, this meal served to kick off the Christmas Eve traditions, as Megan seemed to work through them chronologically and this is the first one she gave me. For Julmust, (pronounced yule-moost), I had to do some research online to figure out the proper spelling.

Text: On Christmas Eve, every year, my family, we have like a very specific ritual, we do the same things every year, so we always start by having dinner and we always have clam chowder, which is disgusting, but my mom likes it, so we still have it, then we have this thing called Julmust, which is like a Swedish version of of like, root beer, but they only drink it at Christmas and it's called Julmust because Jul means Christmas, so like we drink Julmust and have clam chowder, both disgusting things, [pause, laughter] I don’t know why we still do it but my mom likes it.

Texture: Megan’s tone conveyed quite a lot of sarcasm at this point in the interview. It was easy to see her as a passive bearer of this tradition, in her laughter and apparent discuss, as well as the actual words that pointed to her Mom as the person who keeps the tradition alive. While Megan was explaining Julmust to me, she used her hands to try and give me an image of what she was
describing. Her words were clear and concise, likely because she knew what it was like to collect folklore. She was very sure of her words, especially in the sections where she calls the food mentioned here disgusting.

Madeline Thomas
Utah State University
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Dr. Lynne McNeill
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