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Christmas Eve Gifts

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

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Christmas Eve Gifts
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 named 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. Megan and I talked about how the tradition of giving pajamas as gifts was one that extended well beyond her family, a fact that it seems was well known throughout her family. The way Megan talked about the pillow tradition, it seemed like almost a conscious effort to subvert the ‘traditional’ tradition. This tradition is not one that can be placed in the Swedish roots of some of the other Christmas Eve traditions that were shared as part of this interview.

Text: Then we will open our presents to each other, like the siblings all draw names, and then we open our presents between the siblings, and then we open a gift my grandma gets, which is always pajamas, surprise! [Sarcastically] It's like, it stopped being new. And when she doesn’t give us pajamas, she gives us those like fleece blanket things, that she and my grandpa have tied, throughout the year, which sounds awful, they have like 20 grandkids, can you imagine doing that many blankets? It’d be terrible! But umm, she gives them to us but every year my dog decides to take mine as her own and so I have a whole bunch of ruined blankets but its fine, you know, whatever. And then, we all go get into our Christmas jammies, and we open our brand new pillows which our mom gets us every year, I don’t really know why she doesn’t just buy us like one really nice pillow, so she doesn’t have to rebuy them, but whatever.
Texture: Megan was the most blase about this tradition. She talked about it like it was something that everyone had heard of, and one that was widely acknowledged as something everyone did on Christmas Eve. Sarcasm dripped from her voice when she talked about the pajamas, and showed actual confusion at her mom’s choice of buying new pillows every year. She acted almost resigned to her mother’s whims, which defines her mom as the active bearer, but resigned in a nostalgic sort of way. It came across as something that she was allowed to question but would never think about doing Christmas Eve without. When talking about her grandparents tying blankets, Megan made tying motions in the air with her hands. I couldn’t help but agree vocally with her beliefs on how terrible that process would be.

Madeline Thomas
Utah State University
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Dr. Lynne McNeill
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