

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Some holiday food favorites never change

As I pondered the topic “Holiday Traditions” for this month’s Tri-State Family column, I was flooded with many warm memories not only from the past 10 holidays with my own daughter, but also from childhood Christmases decades ago.

I thought of our trips to the local Christmas tree farm to pick out the perfect evergreen. I recalled my brother, two sisters and I string-

ing lengthy strands of popcorn for the tree. Then, there were the Christmas “press” cookies that our mom baked for us when we were quite young, and which we ultimately learned to bake as teenagers.

Music was always part of these memories. Records brought out only once per year stayed fairly scratch-free and always sounded fresh, even though they were the same records to which we listened for the 21 years I lived at home.

Then, there were the radio stations that played music beginning Christmas Eve at 6 p.m. and nonstop through 6 p.m. Christmas day. As a child, we were certainly listening to the radio on my way to my maternal grandmother’s house on Christmas Eve. We would even turn it on during our annual Christmas Eve dinner with my mom’s side of the family. It was the only time of the year I ever recall my grandparents listening to a pop-rock station!

Now, at my own home, I still use a live tree, rather than an artificial tree. Yet, I gave up on stringing the popcorn after my first successful attempt as an adult (there was a reason that my mom had the four of us kids string it!). Another difference for my daughter is the fact

that we have an advent wreath in the center of our dining room table that we light each Sunday night during the season of Advent leading up to Christmas.

Some things, however, never change. We still make cookies. Only now, it is just my daughter, Madelyn, and I who bake and decorate them. My husband, John, is always willing to help eat them up.

Music is still

a key part of our family’s celebrations. In fact, as I write this in mid-November, my daughter is lamenting the fact that radio stations have not yet begun to play Christmas music. Therefore, I have loaned her an old boom box and our Christmas CDs to support her early Christmas spirit.

We now go to a midnight, candlelight church service on Christmas Eve, rather than have dinner with family. Instead, our extended family will gather at our home Christmas morning, where we will celebrate time spent with loved ones over our annual Christmas brunch. Already, Madelyn and John have their brunch requests “submitted.”

Not that their requests ever change from year to year. It is special food usually prepared for only special occasions.

As I ran through all of my memories, my mind kept returning to thoughts of Helen, my maternal grandmother whom, in fact, I called “Grandmother.” Grandmother Helen and her husband, my grandfather, “Papaw Check,” were such an integral part of my childhood Christmases.

Grandmother, especially, made such a wonderful meal on Christmas Eve. However, there was a specialty for which she was known in her church and in her family for making only at Christmas: fudge. However, it wasn’t until I lived with her for two years in my early adulthood that I realized how hard she worked to make this candy.

She began in early December. She made fudge for all of the church members who were “shut-ins.” She made it



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