

Students share fond Christmas memories

Whether for food, family, presents or Santa, each individual remembers this special holiday in a different way

By Jesse Stephenson
Entertainment Reporter

With the holiday fast approaching — for some a little too quickly, and for others not quickly enough — many people find themselves thinking about Christmases past and all the memories they have, whether of parents playing Santa, that special present found under the Christmas tree or just a good meal eaten during the holiday season.

"I never believed in Santa Claus," said accounting major Jeff Hoffman. "My parents didn't want to tell me that he was there when he wasn't. I'm glad that they did that."

While some people had the same experience Hoffman had regarding this fictional gift-giver, many others were given

the chance to experience the wonders of the magical Saint Nicholas.

"Santa Claus was very real in my family," said journalism major Andrew Blazier. "He was real until about the third grade. One night my mom made me get something out from underneath her bed, and while I was down there, I saw two gifts that were wrapped up."

"The next morning, which was Christmas, the same two presents were underneath the tree, only the tags said they were from Santa Claus."

"I kind of had a clue then that he wasn't real, but I did my best to think it wasn't true for a while afterwards."

Another part of Christmas people seem to remember long after the holiday has ended is the food.

"Every year my family goes to my great grandmother's house for dinner on Christmas Eve. She makes the best baked ham ever," said political science major Adam Stuart.

"It's always the same at my house," Hoffman said. "We drink egg nog and get presents."

“Every year my family goes to my great-grandmother's house for dinner on Christmas Eve. She makes the best baked ham ever.”

— Adam Stuart
political science major

Of course, the sometimes the gifts received seem to be remembered much longer than anything else about the holidays.

"I think the best gift that I ever got was when I was in sixth grade," Blazier said. "It was this big old clunky golf bag with three woods and a putter from my Uncle Bob. The only thing I still have from that present is the putter."

Unlike America, many other nations do not consider Christmas as a major holiday.

"In Vietnam, Christmas isn't a big deal," said architecture major Quan Nguyen.

"We go to church and then we open presents, but New Year's is better."

Japanese New Year celebrates new beginnings

This three-day holiday signaling the new year is a time for peace, prayer, festivities and plenty of food

By Elizabeth Hertling
Freelance Reporter

The New Year calls for new beginnings and resolutions. In Japan, it also calls for peace. Called *sangamichai*, literally meaning "three happy days," the Japanese celebration of the New Year lasts from Jan. 1-3.

"You don't have to work. It's a bit of peace for the new year," said Akinori Kuniyama, director of the Japanese Student Organization.

Although the different regions of Japan have their own customs and traditions, some common themes of celebration are shared throughout the country.

During the holiday, families pay a visit to shrines and temples to pray for an upcoming year filled with health and good fortune. In the past, many dressed up in the traditional costume of kimonos when going to the shrines; however, because traditional clothes are difficult to wear, not as many young people wear them anymore.

Outside their homes, the Japanese decorate with a pole covered with pine needles and bamboo, on which they hang the flag of Japan. Inside the house, many clean in order to start the new year fresh.

Food also plays an important role in the New Year celebration. Although the custom is changing now, traditionally women have been the ones who cook in Japan. For the holiday, they prepare festive boxes of food in advance. Containing food that won't spoil easily, the boxes hold enough meals to last the entire three days.

"During the New Year, the man doesn't want his wife to have to cook for him," said Kuniyama.

Besides the vacation time and special food, children in Japan have a special reason to enjoy the New Year: Parents and other relatives will gift them with bonuses of envelopes containing money.

An element of festivities that took place in the past was *shishimai* — the Lion Dance. Although some regions still celebrate this dance, not as many do because of the traditional and complicated steps.

For more information about the Japanese New Year or about possible activities during the holiday, contact the Japanese Student Organization, located in room 202 of the EMU, or call 346-4389.

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