

Winter, cold weather bring fond memories

I hear Christmas and I think winter. I think snowflakes, snowmen, snow angels, frozen windshields, chain advisories, Les Schwab, blizzards and bluebird days. I think hot chocolate in the lodge at noon and sitting in front of the fire at night. I think goggle tans and windburn, avalanches and hardpack. I think nordic skiing, tele skiing, snowboarding and hiking. I think mountains.

I've been in Eugene four years now, but when someone asks me where I'm from I tell them the mountain town where I grew up. After 48 months I still wake up every morning from November to March and check the snow reports at far away places and the road conditions to get there. I still watch the horizon for incoming storms and rejoice in the wind that I know is blowing dark clouds inland toward the Cascades, carrying with them the gift of snow.

There is something magic about a blizzard, something dangerous and seductive about the

possibility of becoming snow bound, of being shut off from the rest of the world by howling winds and driving snow. Winter storms are an



Aimee Rudin
Five feet of fury

excuse to stay at home during the week keeping the fire stoked and reading books for pleasure. They are an excuse to once again act like children, to smile at strangers and throw snowballs at friends. A reason to laugh out loud and gaze up into the heavens with wonder.

I am as connected to winter as I am to my own skin. During the summer when my face is tan, I carry a ghost image of a long-gone goggle tan, as if my face has higher deposits of melanin in some parts than in others. I bear the scars of winter sports and am susceptible to frost bite on my cheekbones. I have bone spurs on my heels from years of hiking uphill in boots, digging my toes in for traction.

Even though the temperature in Eugene rarely drops below 45 degrees, my wardrobe to this day consists of sweaters, fleece and polypropylene. I am more comfortable in layers than I will ever be in a tank-top. It should be expected; I spent my formative years bundled into blankets and swaddled in snowsuits. I sleep with a down comforter on my bed in June, because in the morning if I keep my eyes pinched shut I can almost convince myself that it's 15 degrees outside and storming.

When I was young there was a ritual at my house. The first person awake in the morning

called the snow report, more than 8 inches of new snow meant Linda Ronstadt or the Beach Boys got turned up on the radio and school was optional.

Dad would go sliding across the kitchen floor in thick woolen socks as he pumped his arms in a spasmodic snow dance of thanks. I had more excused absences by the time I was in fifth grade than most people accumulate in a lifetime. I also had and continue to have an incredibly strong relationship with my family and a pretty decent GPA.

I am almost a grown-up now. Last year, rather than drinking champagne at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, I danced on a mountain to the music of falling snow with a man that I love. This year I hope we'll do the same. We're starting our own traditions and they begin with winter.

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continued from page 2C

then cut them down for no use but for people to buy, shove into their houses, then pretend said trees are alive? If Christmas trees were humans, we'd be burying them, not decorating them, ornamenting them and then displaying them prominently in our houses. I suppose you could just go cut down your own. Yes, that's exactly what we need: to cut down more trees in the name of tradition.

Furthermore, these things die so fast that post Dec. 25, one of the most common sights on street sides are withered, skeletal carcasses of trees. I guess some folks wait until New Year's — how humanitarian.

Yes, the last remnants of nostalgia for this holiday have finally worn off. I am grateful to be going home, for spending time with my family, but the rest of the so-called "traditions" that call for mass consumption are absolutely perverse. This isn't Christmas, it's ChristMASS.

Cynicism need not be continued along these lines, however. If I may make a suggestion, how

about bringing something live into your house and decorating that?

At this point, I might risk becoming a cliché of myself — or even worse — viewed as some kind of latter-day Ebenezer Scrooge. But that's really not where I'm going. Joe Bechard asked a good question about Thanksgiving: How do you celebrate it when there's always a bountiful harvest? I would venture an answer and suggest we begin celebrating in a way that contributes to life — all life. Let us reclaim Christmas as a holiday for true reflection and begin questioning the effect our way of life has upon our friends, family, neighbors — upon the world. The answer isn't buying stuff for each other in an attempt to fulfill our greater needs.

I suggest we start cultivating a mindfulness for our actions. I suggest we start cultivating love for all, peace for all, and this begins in the way we engage the world in our minds. I am reminded of two things Mahatma Gandhi said: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world" and "Almost anything you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it."

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