

Opinion

Commentary:

A Blue and White Christmas

As this semester comes to an end, I've been thinking a lot about the holiday traditions my family and I celebrate every year. For most Penn State students the semester wraps up only a week before Christmas. And since graduation day is only three days before December 25th, the pressure has been a little less than intense.

This year my parents have already begun celebrating my long awaited day, instead of the birth of Jesus or Santa's arrival. (Whichever one you prefer.)

Every holiday season, the Achilles family picks out a tree on my father's birthday and then decorates the front window. My mother decided on white for the tree and that was it, and don't try to suggest anything else. All across the house, Penn State pride has begun to make its mark. This year, my mother covered the front window with graduation decorations. She also adorned the outside with holly and huge blue and white bows. In celebration of my graduation, my family will be hanging blue ornaments for a change.

To be honest, I'm thrilled that she went through so much trouble and my parents are without a doubt proud of me. Still a part of me wonders if there's any room for Christmas. It only comes around once a year, right?

I've waited five years to graduate. So why do I feel so ambivalent?

Change isn't my cup of tea, but every year brings unexpected events. Even the planned occasions can bring on a sudden stress.

I know I sound like I'm whining and graduating has to be wonderful. Although, I have two more weeks to go, I know it will be. It'll help me get a job. I've also met so many amazing people at Delco that my experience here has been more than worthwhile.

Maybe I'm scared of growing up. Don't be surprised. This isn't the first time a holiday tradition has ever been broken, but it still causes me a slight nauseous feeling.

Last year sure beat out all the rest. My cat died. The next day my puppy was hit by a car. All the while, our kitchen was in the process of being remodeled. Refrigerator, cabinets, glasses and more made it into the parlor. Cooking and eating became no easy chore.

While the puppy's cries of pain and my sense of space shrunk every day, I realized we all had to work together and simply have fun in new ways. So my mom began collecting singing reindeer, and we hung up a stocking for the puppy full of toys. (Blaze's went up first)

From holiday music, movies or mom's lasagna, traditions define holidays, but it's worthwhile to look into our hearts and appreciate our family and the memories we share together.

SHARON ACHILLES

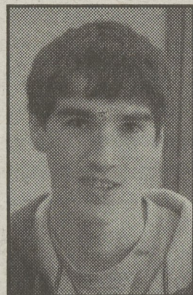
People Poll

Staff writer Brittany Neimeth asked:
Do you think Christmas has become too commercial?



Ryan LaPenta
DUS

Nope, I love Christmas.



Kieran McGurk
DUS

Yes, too much music



Dory Shea
DUS

Yeah...



Derek McMillan
Security Risk
Analysis

I don't like seeing Christmas at Halloween.



Sean Reilly
Biochem and
Molecular Biology

Christmas starts on December 25th, not the first day of school



Crystal Paulino
Computer
Engineering

Yeah, it is. We lost the family value.

Paganism to Christianity: A Look at Christmas

By BRITTANY NEIMETH
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During the time of the Roman Empire, to keep the country united, emperors gave Christian meaning to certain Pagan rituals and holidays. The Pagans and the Christians relented a little on both sides and present day Christianity was formed. Christmas traditions stem from this union.

Paganism is an early religion that draws its focus on the worship of nature. During the winter seasons, the Pagans wouldn't cut down trees and put them in their homes. But they would decorate trees outdoors with metal and statues of Bacchus, the fertility god. Indoors, they would decorate with wreaths, clippings and boughs from evergreen trees. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

The reason pagans chose the evergreen was because although all of the other trees lost their foliage during the winter, evergreens would always be green so they seemed to have magical powers. From December 20 to 23 is the Winter Solstice, a time where the days are at their shortest. The short days frightened people and they were afraid the sun would vanish forever and everyone would freeze to death. To combat what they feared, pagans would put bits of the evergreen into their homes and temples. And voila, we have the origin of the Christmas tree.

Present day Christmas is meant to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but upon research most sources believe

Christ was really born during the warmer months. The Bible states, "That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village guarding their flocks of sheep..." (Luke 2:8). Typically, during cold winter nights shepherds held their livestock in stables for protection, but as shown in this verse, the animals were roaming outdoors.

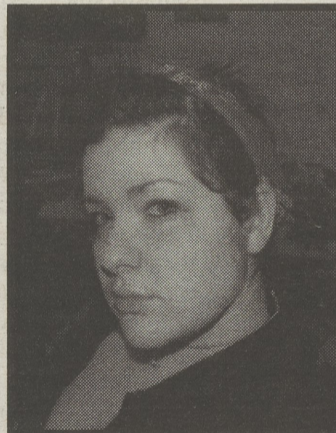
For pagans, Winter Solstice was meant to celebrate the all-powerful Sun God as well as the god of fertility. In order to convert pagans the Roman Empire renamed the winter festival Christmas and redirected the worshipping to the Son of God as opposed to the Sun God.

Santa Claus didn't escape this half-Pagan, half-Christian reality. Parts of his origins were in St. Nicholas, who used his inheritance to help the destitute and the needy. The other part was based around Odin, the pagan god of inspiration and poetry, who was an old man who wore a long robe and had a

beard. Although most people have forgotten about Odin, Wednesday was actually named after him, Woden's Day.

Even the colors of Christmas, red and green, are based in a Pagan tradition. Red and green are on opposite sides of the color spectrum and represent male and female, and thus represent fertility.

So, next time you stand under the mistletoe, remember you're kissing under a Pagan tradition.



PENNSSTATE



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