

Topic: Family social activities

Abstract: I have a mixed European and Native American background. Holidays are celebrated together in my family. My Grandparents are the central hub of gatherings as they pass down their traditions and teachings. Family goes beyond bloodline as I basically have a second mom through my neighbor. I believe it is crucial to keep things like what I've experienced alive. I am proud and love the traditions passed down generation after generation.

Key words: English, Scottish, Irish, German, Native American, Family, Grandparents, Gatherings, Holidays, Teach, Cook, Military, Hunting, .22 Rifle, Fishing, Sports, Fourth of July, Traditions, Proud, passed down, Medium sized Family.

Ethnic designation: *European mix (American)*

Cultural Category: Family Traditions

My Family

It's hard for me to say exactly what my background is. I consider myself an American mutt. I am English, Scottish, Irish, German, and Native American. I consider my family to be a medium sized family. My grandparents on my father's side had four boys and one girl, and my grandparents on my mother's side had two girls and one boy. This leads to a decent amount of cousins, I have eleven. Most of my family lives in California and a few in Texas, which is where my Grandfather on my dad's side is from. It's good to have family close; it makes our traditions and celebrations easier to share with one another. I honestly couldn't imagine holiday's without family, and am grateful to pick up the traditions I experience with them.

My Grandparents on my dad's side were the central hub of our family gatherings. They are now no longer with us. When they were still alive their house was the place that most of our family gatherings occurred. My grandmother was a great cook, and luckily she taught me. During family events she and most of the women would prepare food while the men would lounge around, unless it was meat, which was considered a man's job to cook. It's funny because all the men in my family know how to cook. My grandmother would invite my cousins and I in to teach us how to cook, this was one of my families big traditions. Although you may not always need to prepare your own food, you should at least know how.

My grandfather from Texas was a great guy. One thing he passed down to me was how to cook chili. Once a year my grandfather, my dad, some uncle's, my cousins, and I would enter a local chili cook-off. The cook-off was a good time; we joked and bonded with each other while making multiple pots of chili. My cousins and I being kids were in charge of cutting meat and chopping vegetables while the adults drank beer and "supervised". In my family it's the eldest who has the most say, so when it came to mixing the right blend of chili powder to be put into the chili it was my Grandfathers call. This was always interesting to watch because everyone had their own opinion, and on occasion after the adults had a few beers my cousins and I would get some good entertainment watching grown men bicker about the seasoning of the chili. We did actually win first place one year and third place a couple years later. The recipe was something I learned from him and I will pass that recipe down to the next generation.

Shooting is a part of my families' bloodline. I come from a military and hunting family. Previous generations of my family depended on the ability of shooting accurately to put food on the table. I was taught at a young age how to properly shoot. Like my father I was given a Red Rider BB gun for Christmas when I was six years old, along with a long lecture on gun safety.

When I was eight years old I received a .22 rifle for Christmas that had been passed down from my grandfather, to my dad, and now to me. It was originally given to my grandfather when he was eight to go hunt rabbits for dinner. When first seeing it I was excited, it was a new thing for me, but after learning its history with our family I respected it. During the proper seasons (deer, dove, duck, etc.) we would take hunting trips on a friends' seven hundred acre ranch, along with a few other places. There is nothing better than camping with family and friends, and cooking what you get, it's a pastime.

Fishing is another hobby passed down to me from family, all the men fish, but my uncle and my dad really took me under their wing to teach me. A good family joke of ours is the story of the "Mickey Mouse pole". I was young, around five or six, and my dad had bought me a small Mickey Mouse fishing pole with the little rubber bit at the end of the line to practice casting. One day my dad and I go out fishing with my grandpa and my uncle. For the first time I got to use a hook and bait, nobody expected me to catch anything with this cheap little pole. Well it wouldn't be "my" pole for long. I cast out a few times and then placed the pole in between some rocks to hold it, I then found a crawfish so naturally I started poking it with a stick when I realized my pole moving, then it flew into the water and was gone. The joke of the story is that my dad dove in after this cheap little pole while holding a beer in hopes of catching the fish, he will never live that moment down. That story was told by my grandpa at just about every Easter dinner. I have now begun teaching my nieces how to fish in hopes that they will continue the tradition.

Sports are crucial to my family. I was swinging a baseball bat as soon as I could walk. I started with soccer and t-ball, and then eventually football. All men in my family have played sports. It's great having people who are passionate about them around you. When I played travel baseball during high school my grandparents or various other family members would often come

to games and afterwards we would go out to dinner. This was a great way to spend time as a family.

I consider my neighbors my family. I have known them my entire life, I basically have a second mom, and the kids are my age, so essentially they are brothers to me. We grew up together played the same sports, and were in the same Boy Scout group. I believe family can go beyond bloodline. We are die hard Giants and 49er's fans. When you see the 49er flag flying in their front yard on a Sunday that means one thing, party! When the flag is up the neighborhood is welcome. Everyone brings food or drinks and we watch the game. It gets loud and intense but after years and years of hearing that you become the same way.

The Fourth of July is another big tradition, this time instead of my grandparents' house being the hub for celebration it was our house. As I said I am very close with my neighbors, but so are the rest of my relatives, they would all stay here at our house, it got cramped and I slept on the floor giving up my room for my uncle or whoever needed it. We throw a block party throughout the day. Some years a jump house is rented for the kids to play in.. We set up lawn chairs in driveways and peoples lawns, if you can find a seat it's yours. The firework show is cool; we set up three ladders and place wood planks across them to rest the fireworks on. It's a two person job to get the fireworks going, usually my dad and my neighbor's dad are the ones to put on the show, and after a few cocktails they certainly do. After the show we continue our little block party and have a great time.

As time goes by some traditions die, but I believe it is crucial to keep things like what I experience alive. It's very easy for me to say that my culture is an American culture, at least my version of it. I am proud of it, I love the traditions that my family practices and passes down

generation after generation. Although it is a shame that some will be lost due to people's personal interest. The great thing about "American culture" is that another person may have a completely different experience of culture and traditions. Culture really depends on how you are raised, your surroundings, the people you socialize with, and obviously traditions passed down, no matter how meager they may seem they are still traditions.