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Almond Elementary School

Third Grade, Mrs. Reilly

### **It Just Felt Right**

Just as the four sticks left my hands, I shut my eyes and prayed. "YUT!!!," I heard everyone shout at the top of their lungs. My eyes burst open, and I shook with excitement as I saw all of the four sticks facing up!

I had counted down the days to Lunar New Year, the day I look forward to all year! My whole world came crashing down when I heard the news. Tragically, my All Star basketball tryouts was at 7pm on the same night! I had never missed a Lunar New Year celebration in my life. I couldn't believe I may have to rush through my favorite dinner of the year. I love every mouth-watering dish, and my personal favorite is the rice cake soup with that unbearably delicious salty broth! I also bow to my elders and get a lot of lucky money. But the true highlight of the evening is Yut. With our bellies full, playing this game is pure excitement.

Yut is a very simple yet exciting Korean New Years game. It is so easy that all you do is toss four wooden sticks and move pieces around a game board. The board we use was hand drawn by my Harabuji (grandfather) so it's extra special. I especially love all the shouting and cheering that happens after almost every toss.

It seemed to be the hardest decision of my life. I couldn't make up my mind! Should I miss my tryouts? Finally at 6pm, with clammy palms I said, "Mommy and Daddy, I have made up my mind. I have decided to skip basketball tryouts. I want to celebrate Lunar New Year with everybody at Harabuji's house!" I didn't know if that was the right choice but it just felt right!

# Golu

By Ashwin Itty, Grade 3  
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My parents are from India. My sister and I were born in California but we still celebrate many traditional Indian festivals. My favorite tradition is Golu in the festival of Navratri.

Navratri means nine nights. Like other Indian festivals Navratri is celebrated according to lunar calendar. In USA we follow a solar calendar. So the nine days of Navratri fall on different dates each year. But it always falls around the same time of the year, sometime in October.

I love Golu because it is special for children. My dad puts up steps on which we arrange the traditional golu dolls. There should be an odd number of steps - 3, 5, 7 or 9. Every year we add to our collection of golu dolls. When my sister was a baby, we started with 3 steps, now we have 5. The dolls are traditionally made of clay and show Gods, people and, Gods doing things like people on earth. They show life in India - vegetable sellers, autorickshaw drivers. My favorite one is the elephant-headed Ganesha flying a kite. These dolls are available in India around festival time. My grandma usually buys them for us and wraps them up carefully. Then when we visit India we bring the dolls with us.

We invite friends over to admire our golu and serve them the traditional golu dish "sundal". It is a snack made of chickpeas. We also call our relatives in India on video chat. We show them our golu and they show us theirs. It is like even though they are not here they still celebrate with us.

Every year I am sad to take down the golu and put it away but I know that it will always happen next year.

## 100 Day Celebration for Babies

A Korean tradition that is special to my family is called "bakil chanchi" (pronounced pay-keel chan-chee). My Korean grandparents believe in a big party to celebrate the 100th day of a baby being born. Way back in Korean history, there were infections that wound up killing infants after their birth. If a baby reached 100 days of life, there was a celebration that they made that milestone and would live a normal lifespan. For instance, my baby brother Evan was born on October 14, 2014. We celebrated his 100 day celebration on January 22, 2015 full of yummy food, loving family, and wonderful friends.

What is interesting within that 100 days is that my grandparents also believe in secluding the infant in the house. This means that no other children can come over to possibly get the newborn sick. They enforced this with my older sister, myself, and Evan. Again, they believed that if the baby was protected from outside illness, he/she would have a healthier life. Luckily, I was able to hold and play with my brother as an infant. My grandparents were less strict by the time my brother was born! My mother did not feel this seclusion was necessary but she went along with it because she respected her parents' beliefs and traditions. Overall, I also believe that this was an important celebration to understand and possibly carry on. I appreciate and respect my grandparents' knowledge and them passing it on to future generations.