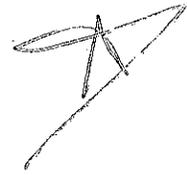


Candles Burning
Annie Schwarz



Always on my Grandma's Shabbat table are two beautiful candles sticks burning. These candle sticks were not any candles, they were brass carved so they looked like a carving in a penny and they had a golden glow. We would use these candle sticks at the Sabbath dinner. I had I always wondered where else the candles burned in our family. One night my grandma told me the story of the candle sticks.

Long ago my grandma's great great grandmother owned the candle sticks she treasured those candles almost as much as she admired her wedding ring. My great great grandmother was a Russian Jew. She lived in Russia for many peaceful years. Sadly, one year Russians came into town and started persecuting Jews. Unfortunately during all of the chaos in her town her husband died. After that tragedy she quickly gave her Candlesticks to another relative and fled to America with her children.

The grandmother gave the candles to my grandmother's cousin once removed (Grace). Grace used those candles sticks for many shabbats for many years. When it was about time Grace wanted to give the shabbat candles to her daughter but she knew that her daughter would not treasure these beautiful candlesticks.

So she sent a letter to my grandma explaining why she should have the candles sticks. My grandma treasures these candles and I think if my great great great grandmother was alive today she would be happy that her candles landed in such a treasuring household. These candlesticks were passed down for generations and generations and generations yet to come and maybe one day they will be passed down to me.

Alexander Shen

25 February 2016

Tomb Sweeping Day

One of the things that we do every year during early April is to observe Qingming Day, also known as Tomb Sweeping Day. This holiday is special to my family because it is how we can connect to my deceased ancestors.

Qingming is a very important Chinese holiday, not necessarily a celebration, but more like a memorial. People once believed throughout the day, the spirits who have passed could come to visit our world. Families would pray at the tombstones of lost ones and burn spirit money and other miscellaneous paper items like cars and homes which were to be sent to the heaven to assist them. After sunset, people usually stay inside, in case they ran into a ghosts who felt offended. As a result of that, the ghost could scare or might even hurt them.

When my family go and visit the graveyard, we bring incense sticks to be burned, flowers, and food that my grandfather would have liked. We first burn our incense sticks, bow deeply for three times as a way to show respect, then lay out the food and flowers and pour his favorite liquor onto the ground above his ashes, and finally stick the incense sticks in front of his tombstone. Usually we would leave my mom, as she always wants to have her moment and peace with her father.

This holiday is the most important to my mother, as my grandfather was a very wise scholar and my mother's mentor and is forever in her heart. My mother usually seems to connect to grandpa whenever she was in the despair and at the crossroad. But, he passed away too young when she was younger.

Tomb Sweeping Day is very important culture to my family because we can communicate to my long lost ancestors.



Holiday Gift

Most people think Thanksgiving is about the meal but, as Catholics, my family digs deeper and takes action. Thanksgiving is a time to thank God for all that He provides. My enormous family gathers in tradition on Thanksgiving and not only fill their bellies with warmly prepared dishes, but choose an animal to donate to an impoverished village.

Seventy-seven years ago, as World War II broke out, bombs hit farms causing loss of working animals. Poverty is prevalent after the war. Charities like Heifer International help end poverty by giving livestock.

Because of my mom's large family, seventeen children, my grandparents begin a tradition of gifting villages rather than each grandchild. On Thanksgiving, after our feast, we gather around the family room. The grandkids write their favorite animal names, fold and then place their votes in a paper bag. We all look forward to this event! The youngest of the children chooses a paper without looking. Some of the recent names selected are Ollama for a llama, and Steve for a water buffalo.

Animals help villages with farmwork, produce cheese, milk, and wool. Once the family of Third World Countries like Kenya, Philippines, and Jamaica, finish using the animal, they have the honor of eating it. Along with the big animal, we donate chickens to supply eggs. Farmers around the world also donate millions of their animals every year. A small gift can keep giving to villages in need.

In American culture, presents are expected but my family enjoys giving instead. Heifer International lifts suffering villages out of poverty, supplying animals that gifts year round. Our Thanksgiving family tradition of selecting a country, an animal and a name, offers a fun event that we look forward to all year. We leave full bellied and full hearted.



Parisa Braun
Covington School
Courtney Mase

I come from a blended family of different cultures (Filipino, Persian, Irish, German) and religious beliefs (Catholic, Muslim, Atheist, Lutheran). Traditions from these many cultures and religions are still practiced, but many new traditions have been established through the years to accommodate our diverse family. One of my most cherished traditions is the white elephant gift exchange, a Christmas Eve tradition shared with my immediate and extended family. Every person buys and wraps a gift under \$10. The gifts are anonymously placed in a pile and we each randomly select one to open, or we can "steal" an opened gift from another. Ultimately, everyone receives a (often very funny) present. Even though the presents are only \$10, the laughs and joy expressed among everyone are worth a million times more. The white elephant tradition reminds me to think about the value in the abundance of shared company, laughter and love, and memories created by family. Laughter and love is free. But they are also priceless. Presents can be \$10 or a thousand dollars, but in reality you don't need to spend anything to create an enduring memory. That's what makes traditions so special - they are not born out of material things, but out of substantial thoughts and actions. That's why they last so long.