

GREGG LAKE CAMP

Nick Teich

This was our camp's first summer at our new home on Gregg Lake. Our campers come from often marginalized communities, and this camp is where they can have a safe home and get to experience the magic of summer camp. All told, we served over 300 campers in Antrim in 2015 and over 150 more in California. Our flagship camps are for ages 8–15 and our leadership camp is for ages 16–18. We also have a family camp long weekend, and we rented the facility to another small camp for three weeks in August. Our activities include archery, rock climbing wall, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding, swimming, arts & crafts, drama, music, creative writing, and a variety of sports. We are already filling up quickly for next year, and look forward to serving a new population for youth with skeletal dysplasia. We continue to grow and love our new home in Antrim! ☆

Grandma's Christmas Traditions

Susan Ellsworth

Every December Grandma would get out her recipe book and write down the items she needed to make her Christmas cookies for all the family. She would make butter cookies, flower and butterfly cookies, prune cookies and many more. It took her days to make enough for all of her three children's families and herself. She made a list of ingredients needed, and Mom would take her shopping. The next day she would get up early and start. She got out her big wooden bread board with a back that hugged the table. She laid out the ingredients to make sure the eggs and butter were at room temperature. She would make one type of cookie and then prepare the ingredients for the next type. Our home smelled like a bakery. We were not allowed to help, but only to watch.

She spread whipped egg whites on top of the butter cookies, and then sprinkled them with little colored or silver ball sprinkles. The flowers and butterflies were pancake cookies made on metal forms that were dipped in the batter, fried, drained and cooled. She sprinkled powdered sugar or honey on them, and it would collect in the wells of the cookies. They were my favorite. The prune cookies got powdered sugar dusted over their tops, too. They were Grandma's favorite. When her baking was done she would store the cookies in a cool place in pretty metal tins and upside-down Tupperware cake carriers. She told us we could all sample one of each. It was hard not to want any more! When her baking was done, after several days in the kitchen, she would move on to her next project. It was time to bring out her Christmas tree.

Grandma had a three-foot fake Christmas tree that was wrapped in a clean sheet and stored until December. It had no lights. Grandma would take out her decorations each year to transform the little tree into a work of wonders for all to see. It would take her several hours to carefully unwrap and decorate the tree with these beautiful family heirlooms. There were little wooden hand-carved and painted ornaments from East Germany. There were angels who sat on gold metal hoops that she would slide over the branches. There were little trains, flowers, and birds, and more angels flying or sitting, and my favorite, an angel holding a little suitcase. I said that angel looked like she was leaving town! There were musical decorations, too.

I remember sitting for hours just looking at all the little decorations on the tree. Each year Grandma would go to Ridgewood, New York, to a German store to buy some new additions for us to admire on the tree. She collected them for many years. I remember bigger ones under the tree, too. There was a Santa with a sled with a little pine tree, a bag of toys, pies, flowers, and so many more. She even had ornaments that were like windmills. They had children holding flowers and would spin around when little candles were lit.

As Grandma got older she didn't have the energy to do it anymore. She knew I loved the sweet little statues and had started my own collection. My cousin had started a collection, too, but had only a few, as there were not many stores near her that sold them. One day after Christmas, while my cousin and I were playing, she called us to her room. She told us she was not going to be able to do this any longer and wanted us to carry on the tradition. She let us each pick one ornament at a time, taking turns until they were all divided up. We were both so proud and happy to be the ones chosen to carry on Grandma's Christmas tradition. I am looking forward to the day when it will be our turn to pass the tradition on to our children, as Grandma did for us. We owe it to our wonderful loving grandmother to keep the tradition alive. ☆

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