

## SENIORS SPEAK

# Left on tradition

BY MONICA LEFTON  
monicalefton@csdecatur.net

It's November 29th. I reach up to the fifth shelf of the CD tower in our den, and I pull out a CD. Turning on the stereo, I place the classic Christmas jingles into the tray and press play. Reindeer hooves click and silver bells ring out around my house. I walk out of the den in my Santa shaped socks and into the kitchen. My mom stands at the counter, mixing sugar cookie dough.

It's finally Christmas time in the Lefton household, and I love it.

One of my favorite holiday traditions is unpacking our Christmas music. We have an unsaid rule in my house: don't listen to any Christmas music until the day after Thanksgiving. The week before Black Friday, Christmas tunes are playing on the radio and in department stores, but not at my home.

When I was in elementary school, we celebrated our dog Madison's first Christmas. One of the Christmas albums we own includes the track "Jingle Bells" by The Singing Dogs. I used to play the tune non-stop for Madison, hoping she could get into the holiday spirit along with the rest of us.

In recent years, every time the dogs' barking comes on, I run to the stereo and skip it. The chaos feels a little too juvenile for me, and my cat doesn't enjoy the yelps of various dogs echoing through the house.

Years later, after the holiday flick "Love Actually" hit the big screens, my older sister Hannah purchased it. After the DVD came the soundtrack. In no time, Olivia Olson's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" rang through the Lefton halls.

My sisters and I would belt out the lines about stockings on the fireplace and wishing for snow. Even today, I keep the anthem on my iPod year-round.

A year or two ago, my family really became dependent on Pandora.

As Christmas time approached, I created a station for the "Elf" movie soundtrack. This, along with the Michael Buble and Glee Christmas stations, introduced a new favorite: "Baby, It's Cold Outside." The song's stark contrast between Zooey Deschanel and Leon Redbone always tickles my skin, making my hair stand on end.

All these songs define an important holiday tradition for me.

Waiting to play holiday tunes isn't just a silly custom. The restraint builds excitement.

Years have passed, and I still looked forward to bringing out the family's holiday music this year.

The tradition makes me feel that I am a part of something. I find a comfortable place, a place I feel I can belong, along with all of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

I like to think that next year, when I'm off at college, I'll stick with my Christmas tradition and hold off on listening to lyrics about glistening treetops and roasted chestnuts. It might not be easy to avoid, but it will be worth it. ■

Photo courtesy of Lew Lefton

