

To Celebrate or Not to Celebrate. That is the Question.

My dad's family is Jewish and my mother's family is Baptist. So far so good. Now, my dad's family owned a general store so it is traditional for them to celebrate Christmas with the tree and presents minus the Jesus part. My mom's family, especially her grandparents, were Primitive Baptist, a very strict form of Southern Baptist. They did not allow for the celebration of Christmas in their house because they believed it was a pagan holiday. So keep track how my Jewish family celebrates Christmas and my Christian family does not. My nuclear family celebrates Christmas and Hanukkah despite the fact that all of us are Jewish. Now my closest friends growing up (the ones we always considered family) are a Methodist and a Pagan respectively so my family was left with the dilemma of hosting a holiday party without offending anybody too badly. It ended up that one of my friends mothers had the answer—our Latin class would host the party and call it Saturnalia!!!

—mara goldberg '09

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My family has a couple of bizarre holiday traditions—and boy, am I ever looking forward to them! On Christmas Eve, we eat at a local Chinese Buffet, and afterwards, we drive around southcentral PA “lightalerting” until about 2AM. “Lightalerting” involves scoping out light displays, everything from the gaudiest to the prettiest. When we go home, we watch my mom's favorite movie, “It's a Wonderful Life.” These Christmas traditions are pretty strange, considering my family is Jewish. Nevertheless, we enjoy them just as much as Hanukkah.

The second tradition occurs on New Year's Eve. At midnight, my family gathers on our patio and bangs cooking pots. This tradition was passed down from my dad's side of the family; they're from Philadelphia. It is related to the noise-making tradition of Mummers to drive away evil demons during the New Year. Even though we live far away from other houses, sometimes other people bang pots in response to our noise. What a way to ring in the New Year!

—jessica schwartz '09



My family has always just been my mom and me, with occasional appearances from my brother, father, and now a stepfather. I've never had sisters, or even a lot of female cousins, so BMC was a big adjustment.

As corny as it sounds, the women of Radnor have become my family. They are the people I come home to at the end of each day, the ones I watch TV with at night, the ones I eat my meals with, the ones I brush my teeth alongside. They see me at my best and worst. If that's not a family, I don't know what is.

It's not just Radnor, though; most of Bryn Mawr is like this, from what I've seen. We might not always get along, we might fight, or get on each other's nerves, but the love is always there because we are in it together. And isn't that family? I think so.

—kaitlin menza '09



My mother died when I was three, and it's always bothered me how many girls don't appreciate what they have. If you're reading this, you really don't know how good you've got it. On move-in day, I walk by rooms full of parents helping their kids unpack and hear the bickering and whining of Mawrtys everywhere. We may be mature in many ways, but I still can picture the rolling eyes, the classic teenage tone—the four syllable, “MaOOommm.”

My father remarried when I was thirteen to a woman he'd been dating for five or six years. We never got along; she seemed to compensate for not being my birth mother by being a hard-ass. Or maybe her parenting style stems from a jealousy of the love my father will always have for me, but that sounds like such a Freudian explanation. Either way, she puts more energy in caring for her Yorkie than she ever did in being a real mother to me. I stopped leaving my room when she was home to avoid her passing comments in the hallways; I lost my confidence and outgoing nature; I felt afraid to ask for anything I needed because she made me feel greedy and selfish.

Thankfully, I made good friends... and my friends had great moms. I became the mom-thief. I've called my best friend's mother, “Mom” for five years or so. She even bought me my first bra. I stole other moms, too, though: the stay-at-home moms with law degrees, the moms with whom I worked at the library whose children never seemed to realize how amazing and laid-back they were, the moms who worked all day and then volunteered for the school marching band to be with their kids, the moms who drove their children and all of their friends to all five billion after-school activities.

I feel like diversity in family composition is not something we address much at Bryn Mawr. Sometimes I feel like I'm alone as the only motherless one on campus. I feel like I'm having a harder time with the big questions. What does it mean to be a woman? Who am I really? Especially that last question. Well, to sum up—put some effort into appreciating your mom, even if she drives you crazy, or watch out for thieves.

—sofia nitchie'09