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The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States

走进 INSIDE U.S. CULTURE AND LIFE 美国文化

Maxine F. Huffman

Donald M. Huffman

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外语教学与研究出版社

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PREFACE

When we began our professional careers in the biological sciences more than 50 years ago, like most academics in higher education, we had written primarily research papers and theses. These are necessarily rather limited in style to the expectations of standard style manuals, major professors and editors of journals to which we submitted our research accounts. We assumed that our writing through the years would be primarily in science, and we felt we had adequately met professional expectations when our writing was accepted by editorial guardians. From time to time we wrote papers or books with fewer style restrictions, but still recognizable as “academic.”

About 30 years ago we became involved in international study programs, first in Mexico and later in China. Some of our writing became less scientific in nature. There are more informal reports and accounts of experiences which stretched our cross-cultural interests and required less stylistic writing.

The most radical change in our writing experience occurred about 12 to 15 years ago when we were invited to join a team of professors at Zhejiang University to write a series of textbooks in English for Chinese university level students: *New College English* (NCE), published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research

Press (FLTRP) in Beijing. This became both the primary focus of our professional writing, a continuing opportunity for friendship with Chinese teachers of English, and an appreciation for the high quality of publication efforts of this largest foreign language publisher in China. Following the publication of the first book of the series of six, we were invited to serve as the English editors for the textbook series, and this has continued through the 2nd edition of NCE. We continued to learn as we wrote and edited, and were gratified with the success of NCE used by millions of Chinese college and university students.

Following completion of the publication of NCE, the Zhejiang University writing team leader, Prof. Ying Huilan, and other colleagues at Zhejiang University began constructing and developing an online platform of English instruction called *BingoEnglish* to meet a different clientele of English learners. Among the newly written materials which Prof. Ying hoped to use for *BingoEnglish* were individual blogs dealing with different aspects of U. S. culture, such as holidays, foods, travel, etc. This form of writing is considered as it is quite popular nowadays. They are usually related to one or several subjects or themes of topical interest, and there is a personal point of view, much like a personal diary. The viewers will be interested to know that something changes every day. We were then invited to begin writing blogs, and we also asked friends to write short, personal accounts of their lives for use in English instruction. Ultimately, Prof. Ying discussed the use of blogs with Chang Xiaoling, Managing Director of Higher English Education Publishing at FLTRP, and there was a joint decision to use a collection of these writings in a book, to be entitled *Inside U.S. Culture and Life*. We agreed that this sounded like a worthwhile project, and began to build a collection of blogs, some of them accompanied by photographs, mostly from the collection of our personal photographs.

The blogs in this book will appeal to a wide range of readers. Even though they may be limited to the experiences of the authors, they cover many different aspects of American culture, including U.S. holidays, family traditions, sports and recreation, learning and education, and environmental concerns, etc.

It is both necessary, and certainly appropriate to express our thanks and acknowledge the assistance, wisdom, and contributions of others in publication of a book of any sort, and that is especially true of *Inside U.S. Culture and Life*. First of all we want to thank Prof. Ying for encouraging us to begin writing the blogs, for preparing the notes for each blog, and for her help in discussing the possibility of publishing them with the FLTRP. Both Prof. Ying Huilan and Zhao Chunmei, editor of the book, have offered consistently excellent advice and comments in the process of preparing the passages for publication, and we could not have completed the task of writing and editing without their help. We also wish to thank our daughter Kim and each of our friends whose blogs have been included in this book, and whose interest in the project has been helpful throughout the process. Their names are evident in the blogs, but we also want to thank the many other persons who have encouraged us in this endeavor. Any defects or mistakes are ours, and many interesting features would not be present without the help of these people. Special acknowledgement and thanks also go to the authors of the creative commons licensed pictures from <http://commons.wikimedia.org> that appear in the book.

We hope that these passages may be of interest to many of you who read them. They will inevitably remind you of similar experiences you have had, and hopefully will encourage you to put your own thoughts and observations in writing for others to share.



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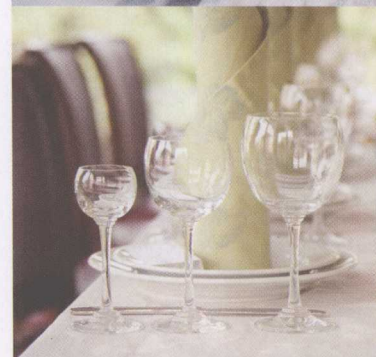
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Christmas Is Over



Jan.

6

Yesterday I put away¹ the Christmas stockings. We had taken them down a few days ago, but now they had to be stored away² for another year. It's always lots more fun to put up the Christmas decorations than it is to take them down. When we put them up, there is always the anticipation of the Christmas to come, the festivities³, gift giving, etc. When we take them down, all the fun is over and there's nothing but the gray, bleak⁴, often cold, weather of January. Some people say it depresses them; it doesn't depress me...I just don't like the fuss⁵ of putting all the things away. Don's big job at Christmas time is putting up the white icicle lights⁶ that twinkle⁷ on the wood at the edge of our roof. Everyone on our little one-block long street has them, so it makes for a very pretty street when anyone turns on them. Now they are all gone for another year. Don also puts away our artificial Christmas tree that we now use instead of buying a real tree.

1 put away: 把……收起来, 放好

2 store away: 把……储存

3 festivity: 庆祝活动

4 bleak: 阴冷的, 寒冷的

5 fuss: 忙乱


6 icicle light: 冰条状装饰灯

7 twinkle: 闪闪发亮, 闪烁

8 myrrh: 没药, 一种芳香族树脂



Yesterday was January 6th. In Christian mythology, it's also known as Epiphany^{*}, the day that Three Wise Men^{*} from the Middle East were supposed to have given the baby Jesus precious gifts of gold, silver, and myrrh⁸.



In most Latin American countries, January 6th is a very important part of Christmas. Children get their Christmas gifts on that day instead of on December 24th or 25th. In the U.S., we ignore it for the most part. Yet as children, one of our favorite Christmas songs is “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” which refers to the twelve days between December 25th and January 6th. In fact, when our daughter Kim was young, she loved it so much that I had to repeat it over and over for her. To this day, she can repeat every word of it even though it is quite long. The song is fun because it tells about how each day someone gave a special gift to his true love. Each day one has to repeat all of the gift names. It’s fun for kids and adults alike. In fact, this year at the college Christmas candlelight concert, Mark, the choir¹ leader, included a very clever version of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” as part of the concert, and it brought cheers from the audience after its performance. I’ll include the words at the end of this.

But back to Christmas (and its end). We celebrate our Christmas in our traditional way when we are in Pella. Sometimes we go to our vacation home [★] in the Rocky Mountains² in Idaho³. In fact, we had planned to this year, but Mother Nature intervened⁴.

1 choir: 合唱团

2 Rocky Mountains: 落基山脉, 位于美国西部

3 Idaho: 爱达荷州, 位于美国西北部

4 intervene: 干预, 介入

5 blizzard: 暴风雪

6 Kansas: 堪萨斯州, 位于美国中部

7 Colorado: 科罗拉多州, 位于美国中西部

8 Nebraska: 内布拉斯加州, 位于美国中西部

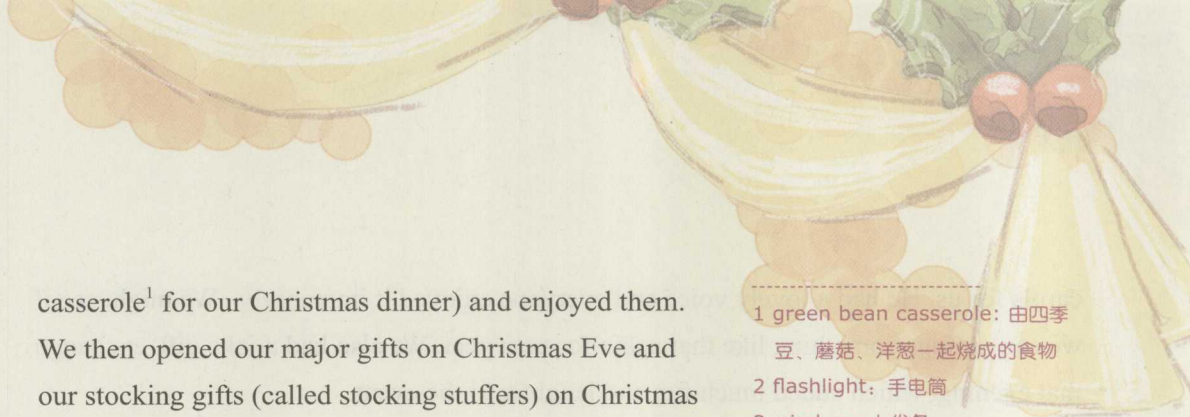
9 Wyoming: 怀俄明州, 位于美国西部

10 oyster: 牡蛎

11 tenderloin beef: 牛里脊肉

12 escalloped potato: 焗土豆

There was a terrible snow storm (it qualified as a blizzard⁵) that shut down all of the highways through Kansas⁶, Colorado⁷, Nebraska⁸ and Wyoming⁹. We stayed home and are glad we did, as there have been even more storms in that area since. Anyway, we ate our traditional foods (chili and oyster¹⁰ soup along with Mexican Christmas Eve salad, a delicious fruit salad, on Christmas Eve, and tenderloin beef¹¹ with escalloped potatoes¹² and green bean



casserole¹ for our Christmas dinner) and enjoyed them.

We then opened our major gifts on Christmas Eve and our stocking gifts (called stocking stuffers) on Christmas morning. I had given everyone a flashlight² that doesn't ever need batteries, and they all seemed pleased. I found them in one of the many catalogs I received and ordered them over the phone, to be sent by mail. One makes the flashlight work by winding it up³. Then it will operate for 30 minutes. Oh yes, I got one for myself too. We all received nice gifts, but the one I especially appreciated was from Don. It's a really nice silver chain that I now have a lovely gray pearl on (given to me by a dear friend in China). The brilliance of the silver sets off⁴ the beauty of the pearl.

Of course, we did other Christmassy⁵ things. I especially enjoyed the Christmas carol⁶ singing that is held each year in a little century-old country church about 15 miles from here. People crowd into the place and choose the Christmas songs that we will sing, accompanied by the little old organ⁷ played by our friend Davis. People come there from our town, neighboring towns, and the nearby farms. Since we don't all know each other, we can easily socialize afterwards by having hot cider⁸ or coffee and Christmas cookies that some of us have baked. Kim made lots of them.

Music is important to us, so we were pleased when some of the college choir members came to our house to sing Christmas carols. Caroling, as it is called, is also an old tradition in the U.S. and England. We knew they were coming so had cookies and drinks ready for them too. One other evening we entertained a group of long-time friends at a potluck^{*} in our home and had a college student come to sing and play Christmas

1 green bean casserole: 由四季

豆、蘑菇、洋葱一起烧成的食物

2 flashlight: 手电筒

3 wind up: 上发条

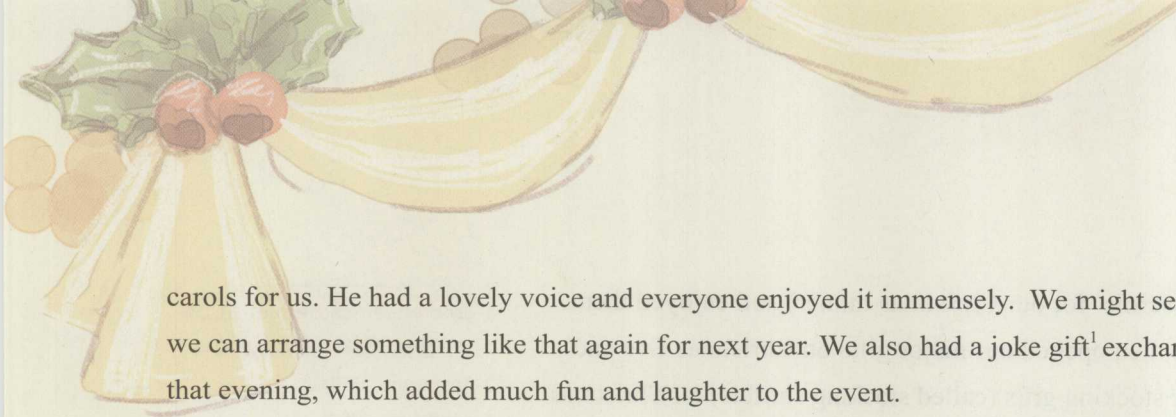
4 set off: 衬托, 使更为突出

5 Christmassy: 圣诞节气氛的

6 Christmas carol: 圣诞颂歌

7 organ: 风琴

8 cider: 苹果汁



carols for us. He had a lovely voice and everyone enjoyed it immensely. We might see if we can arrange something like that again for next year. We also had a joke gift¹ exchange that evening, which added much fun and laughter to the event.

Of course, a major part of our enjoyment of the Christmas holidays was when our granddaughter Cassie was with us. She's a delightful seven year old who had a great time walking the dog with Grandpa Don and baking cookies with Aunt Kim. Then Cassie loves it when we deliver the cookies to elderly and shut-in friends. We're glad that she has an early concept of being nice to people. Kim started the cookie delivery with her last spring when she came to visit and we made and delivered May baskets^{*} filled with cookies to people on May 1st (another old American and English custom, only traditionally the baskets have flowers instead of cookies). Cassie always has more things she wants to do in Pella than she ever gets done. That's OK because that way she's always eager to visit us.

Enough about our Christmas. Yes, it is over, but the good memories and feelings last for all of us, even after the tree, stockings, lights, and other decorations have been put away. Meanwhile, here are the words of "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me a partridge² in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me two turtle doves³ and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

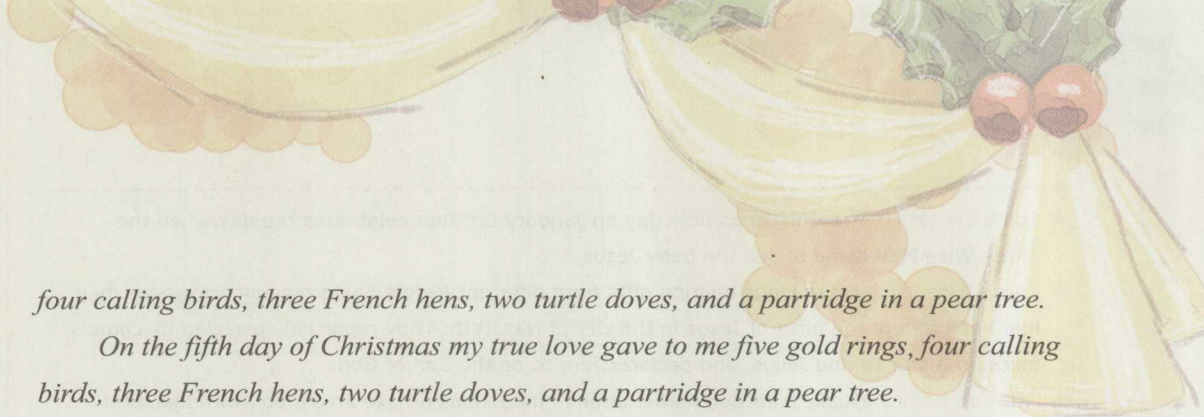
On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me



1 joke gift: 开玩笑的礼物

2 partridge: 山鹑

3 turtle dove: 斑鸠



four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me six geese a-laying^{}, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.*

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me nine ladies a-dancing, eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me ten lords a-leaping, nine ladies a-dancing, eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me eleven pipers a-piping, ten lords a-leaping, nine ladies a-dancing, eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me twelve drummers a-drumming, eleven pipers a-piping, ten lords a-leaping, nine ladies a-dancing, eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, five gold rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.