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Tradition

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Tradition

By Pricilla Ceja

I live in a small town in the Central Valley. Being from a small town meant there is not much to do, except once a year for about a week when the Spring Fair would come around. Every year my friends and I would always get excited about it wondering what rides would be there, if there were any new ones, what kind of fair food we would eat, and what kind of act was going to be the main event. The first year I moved there was the year I was introduced to the fair and thankfully it happened during a first-grade field trip so I didn't have to spend it alone, lost and confused. I remember the only ride we were able to get on was the Ferris wheel. Our chaperon bought our group of six tickets enough to go on a ride of our choice but we all had to agree on it (and reach the height limit). Being on top of what seemed like the world was so strange, I don't want to say it was life changing, but in a way, it was.

The next year was a little different. I was still the new kid and had not formed any real "out of school" friendships and so I went to the fair alone, with my mother. I remember going through all the little kid rides by myself and having no issues with them, but then I decided to be brave and stand in one of the big kid lines. I remember my world felt a little blurry waiting in line. I remember my hands got sweaty and I felt the people in line being too close to me. I remember looking for my mom, trying to find her sitting at the bench waiting for me but I couldn't see her. And then I got to the front of the line and I had a decision to make, do I walk straight and leave through the exit or do I turn right and enter the ride. I looked up at the uninterested ticket collector, shakenly showed him my free rides bracelet and walked onto the Gravitron. Leaving the ride a bit bolder, I led my mom right back to the kiddie rides until it was time to leave, not before I rode the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that year. A tradition I was able to keep even through the next two years when I had to go with my sisters and all it took were a few tears and pleading.

Fifth grade was the first year I was able to go with friends. I remember sitting in class during silent read when my best friend at the time passed me a note asking if I wanted to go to the fair with her and her brothers. I also remember getting a stern look from the teacher because I gasped in excitement. The next three years my friend and I went together, once more with her brothers, once just me and her,

and one final time with our little group from junior high. At the top of the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that year, my best friend of four years told me she was moving away. The excitement of being at the top of the world and being able to see across the field and see the whole fair went away. The lights went blurry as I started to cry and the sounds of the radios playing from the other rides went away. All I could hear was my friend telling me she would still be in touch. The fair ended, school ended, and my friend never talked to me again.

Freshman year, I went with a boy. My parents thought I went with a group of friends again, which I did but we all split off with our respective partners as soon as we got to the middle of the fair. I remember every chance he got he would put his arm around me and I would mentally scream and physically distance myself. It's not that I didn't want to be with him, but what if someone saw? On top of the world, we had our first kiss on our first and last ride on the Ferris wheel for the first and last time that night before going home. We broke up a week later before he moved away.

Sophomore year, I went with a girl. Again, my parents thought I went with friends and I did except she didn't want to be with them so we split off alone. It felt familiar and yet different with her. I remember she would get closer and I would get nervous, mentally scream and try to move away, we weren't doing anything bad but what if someone saw? Is this how Mosquita y Mari felt when they were laying on the couch together? They weren't doing anything bad, but what if someone saw? What would they think of them? I remember her grabbing my hand tight when we went upside down or spun really fast on every scary ride. When we got on the Ferris wheel for the first and last time, she told me she liked me and we made out until we lost our breath. She switched schools the following week.

The next two years I spent the fair with my friends (and brother). But something was different. There were too many people. Instead of short lines with a waiting time of 10 minutes, we would have to stand waiting 30 minutes if we were lucky and no groups jumped the line. Instead the lanes between the rides and games were filled with people. My little town was growing. Big named companies never lasted long because no one trusted anything other than the local restaurants or stores, but times were changing. Open fields that were reserved for farming are being bought for houses, with

the local news articles talking about how “Shopping is conveniently located just around the corner” inviting people to shop at these big name companies. These were the only years I wasn’t able to get on the Ferris wheel because of the long lines. None of my friends wanted to wait to get on and my brother wanted to go home, we were all tired and hungry. More people meant higher food prices, something we didn’t expect the first year and figured it was cheaper to eat after during the second year.

The next year my friends and I spent the money for the free rides bracelet for our siblings and bought tickets for ourselves. We decided it wasn’t worth wasting the money on the bracelets on ourselves if we were only going to be able to ride 5 rides, since we would be leaving early to eat. It was nice getting to hang out with my friends under the shady benches and people watch. We were able to try out the fair games, something we didn’t do because they wouldn’t allow the prizes on the rides and leaving them out was the fastest way to get them stolen. Leaving the fair to go eat, we figured out that with everyone at the fair meant downtown was free. We were able to walk into restaurants that would usually require a reservation and be as loud as we wanted, within reason of course. After, we ended up going to the movies and had the whole theater room to ourselves. Laughing out loud and making fun of the people on the screen I think we all collectively agreed we were having more fun there than we’ve been having at the fair the last three years. The fair had a lot of firsts for me, and I saw it as a tradition to finish it off with the Ferris wheel ride, but after spending that night hanging out with my friends I realized some traditions were meant to be broken because they sometimes created better ones.