A Family Tradition

Darlene Lee

PRE-READING:
en route is French for on route or on the way
sightsee combines the noun “sight” with the verb “see” and means to go look at things
BBQ stands for barbecue

Once the weather changes and school lets out, my family and I look forward to our family reunion. It’s a traditional celebration started by my great-grandparents before I was born.

I remember my family’s gas station stops en route from Detroit to Chicago and from Chicago to Detroit. My two brothers and I stretched and talked while our Dad pumped gas at either a Texaco or Standard station.

As we traveled the highway, we got to sight-see. We saw different animals and old trucks that smelled of cows, as the wind blew through the open car windows. We could also hear the radios of passing cars and honking from the big trucks.

At the reunion, we met new family members and passed on lessons and stories. We enjoyed the foods that everyone helped make: pies, cakes, BBQ, and southern fried chicken. Hugs and laughter filled the air. There was music: blues and 60s songs played on a record player. I loved the baseball games and races.

Growing up this way was important to me. We keep this tradition even now. We want our kids to know their cousins and to love each other.

Darlene Lee is a student at Black Hawk College Outreach Center in East Moline, IL. She was born in Detroit, the fourth child and second daughter in a family of 6. She is the mother of one son, grandmother of four, and great-grandmother of one.

Some BBQ History

In the West Indies, the Spanish encountered indigenous people cooking meat over a slow fire. It was called “barbacoa.” The word barbecue also has roots in West Africa where it was called “babbake.” This word describes the concept of building a large fire and cooking food over a long period of time. According to culinary expert, Michael Twitty, “It was enslaved Africans and their descendants who became heir to multiple traditions and in turn incorporated those traditions into a standard repertoire known as Southern barbecue” (<afroculinaria.com>).

Who else is talking about BBQ? Read about Juneteenth (front cover), July 4th (p. 42), and the article by Darlene Lee above. What is the role of BBQ in these stories?