

CUSTOM MADE

Students share traditions from unique family backgrounds

by Gisella Joma and Varsha Venkat



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Ever since the second grade, juniors Christina and Stephanie Cheng have

been worshipping at a Daoist temple every Saturday. The sisters practice Daoism, a religion very similar to Buddhism that is practiced by many people in China. At the temple, Christina and Stephanie attend lectures on Daoist beliefs and chant prayers. According to Christina, there is a sense of community in the temple, although everyone welcomes new members who stop by.



Sophomore Kai Rautanen celebrates the mid-Summer Solstice, a popular

tradition in her native country of Finland. It's a popular event in the Nordic countries because the sun never sets in the north. During the holidays, Rautanen's family and her friends gather around a bonfire and eat traditional Finnish dishes including crepe pancakes called pannukakku and Finnish sausages known as makkara. Although she hasn't participated in the holiday festivities much since her departure from Finland, she still enjoys reminiscing of past summers with her extended family in their native country.

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PERFECT AIM Junior Rachel Stolzman aims at her target board. Though biracial, she inherited a love for American tradition from her father.

Most MVHS students have taken camera shots or have shot a film, but for junior Rachel Stolzman, shooting means aiming at a target. Some may think that Stolzman embodies an all American girl. However, she comes from a mixed background.

Her mother's side of the family is Japanese — including all of their beliefs and values. On the other hand, her father's side of the family originated from a variety of countries including France, Canada and Germany.

When Stolzman's father was a kid, he bought his first BB gun and went shooting by the creek near his house. Eventually, he introduced her to shooting as well and sparked her interest in the generally male-dominated sport. Last year when she went to Texas, she used a semi-automatic UZI for her first time. Since Stolzman has been shooting since she was four years old, she has extensive knowledge of guns and how to use them.

"When we lived in San Jose, we'd set up little cans in the backyard and we'd just take turns shooting at them," Stolzman said. "He would let me shoot the pellet guns. Then when I was around 12, I shot my first shotgun."

However, Stolzman's involvement in this sport

was more of her own choice than her father's. Whenever she got the chance, she tried to go shooting and over time, it became her favorite hobby. Stolzman recently had the opportunity to shoot her first handgun while visiting her uncle in Dallas.

"The kick [from the shotgun] was pretty hard on my arm, and it hurt for a little bit," Stolzman said. "So I was a little nervous about that, [but] when I pulled the trigger I was just like 'Oh! This is fun!' and we were doing it over and over again until we ran out of bullets."

Most Japanese girls don't ride motorcycles.

junior Rachel Stolzman

While Stolzman enjoys many traditional American pastimes such as shooting and driving motorbikes, she continues to maintain a strong tie

with her mother's Japanese background as well. Stolzman frequently visits Japan with her mother. She also celebrates traditional Japanese holidays such as Hina Matsuri and loves to watch Japanese dramas with her mother.

"[My culture] is like two cultures blended into one," Stolzman said. "It's really weird, like most Japanese girls don't ride motorcycles or shoot guns, so it's a very different kind of culture than what everyone else expects it to be."