

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE

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December 29, 2020



HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES AROUND THE WORLD

This weekend on Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show that discusses the lives and work of the people on campus and beyond, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, stages his annual December holiday special. Guests include Radaina Tarek Mousa, Paul Pitts, and Miriam Roccia; sharing memories and traditions.

This episode of Segue aired at 9 a.m. this Sunday, August 4, 2019, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound and siue.edu/wsie.

Mousa is a Visiting Fulbright Scholar, a native Egyptian. The Fulbright Scholarship gave her the chance to teach her Egyptian language skills to American students. This is her first teaching experience, but she expects to continue teaching. She explains about breaking the fast of Ramadan through the holiday of Eid al-Fitr. This Islamic holiday does not occur at the same time from year to year. The best part of the holidays is the tradition of grandchildren receiving money and treats from their grandmothers.

Paul Pitts is an alumnus, retired member of the US Air Force and twenty-one year retired SIUE employee in Institutional Compliance. Pitts celebrates Christmas Eve with church and gifting. The Chancellor reveals he is himself a "Christmas morning" gifter. Pitts says faith remains central to all the ways they commemorate the holiday. His family prays the New Year in, and then a big family brunch. The Pitts family also celebrates Kwanzaa. Pitts says he loves caroling. He favors the traditional carols, but also appreciates contemporary holiday music, particularly those that reflect a "blues" sensibility.

Pitts reflected that his most memorable Christmas was 1970 when he was serving in Vietnam, and was able to come home and see his family.

Miriam Roccia is Associate Vice Chancellor with a broad portfolio of activities and programs. She celebrates Hanukkah. It is an eight-day celebration of the restoration of the temple. It celebrates the miraculous oil lamp that burned for eight days when only one day's worth of oil remained.

Holiday menorahs have spots for eight candles of recognition and a taller "working" ninth candle, which families use to light the others in sequence.

She explains that the best-known observances of Hanukkah are the delicious food and the dreidel game. She says it's important to understand the universal roots of all winter holidays in the winter solstice and other pagan aspects of the December traditions.