

REMEMBERING THANKSGIVING

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Home from a Thanksgiving Dinner at the Coffee Cup. Just as good as I could have cooked except it lacked a few of the trimmings - like olives and pickles, dish of celery and tomatoes, and nuts and candy. I am too full and just as miserable as I expected to be.

Everyone in the family went their own way. Minnie and I had an invitation out, but I don't want my younger friends to feel that they have to invite us. Of course, I could have stayed home and asked someone less fortunate than we are, but I just did not feel like it. One little old lady that does nothing but complain and says everyone has such short memories and now that she is old - who wants her.

We have both had naps and now Minnie is watching football and I am going to try to write of past Thanksgivings.

When we first came to Florida, the family usually got together, more probably picnic style, if the weather was nice. One Thanksgiving we had no meat. The men killed an opossum and the women cooked it. It was not a howling success.

What Dad liked best was to have the family at his table and proudly say that everything on the table came from his garden. New peas, new potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, and the big old hen or hens as the crowd demanded. Now part of the fun of Thanksgiving is having everyone stay or come back at supper time and make sandwiches and eat pie and cake that was left over. They never ate it all up so the next day we had more of the same and sometimes it tasted better than the first day.

This is only the second time that my husband and I have been alone in all these years. The first time I have ever eaten a Thanksgiving Dinner at a restaurant.

When Alvin and I were married we lived in a little town in New Mexico. This little town had no electricity and no running water. The railroad had a station and a boiler room. The men had rigged up a shower by putting up a five gallon milk can with holes in it and you could adjust the valves and have the water just as hot as you wanted. The men went down there and I said to Alvin, "Why can't you take me down there?" He said, "I don't know, why not?" So he did. The women of the town were horrified when I told them. We had made friends with a couple our age and enjoyed playing cards with them and going to baseball games. Thanksgiving came and they had their own families. Alvin and I got a nice big turkey for our dinner.

The night before I wanted to go to the pump house for a bath. So down we went. Alvin would go in and see if anyone was there. There was. A tramp was there sleeping in the big room. These pump houses were the favorite abode for tramps during the winter season. The shower was in a separate room. We had only a flash light so Alvin eased me into the shower room and said he would stand guard. I had a delightful shower. The next day I cooked the turkey to perfection with all the trimmings and we hardly made an impression the turkey. Alvin said, "I'll go down and see if that tramp is still at the pump house and if he is let's take a dinner to him." He was and we did. I'm sure he wondered, "How come?" I had had a good shower. That was our first Thanksgiving.

There are an awful lot of Thanksgivings to remember in all these years. I shall tell of two that stand out from the others.

Alvin and I were in New York. It was during the depression years. My cousin Admer and his family lived out in Maplewood, N. J. They asked us to come out for Thanksgiving; to come out the evening before which we did. We had helped buy the sixteen pound turkey. That evening we all decided to go to New York the next morning and watch the Macy Parade - I saw some of it this morning on T.V. Thanksgiving morning Clara fixed the turkey with the dressing ready to cook. I thought she was going to put it in and let it cook while we were gone. But no - she was going to cook it when we got back from the parade. Now, Clara was one you did not make suggestion to, especially in her own home. So off we went with that beautiful turkey on the table instead of in the oven. Maplewood is a "fur piece" from New York even if you make perfect connections. So it was after 12:30 when we got back. The four teenagers were starved and so was I but that turkey still had to be cooked. We got everything else ready and waited and waited. Finally Clara said we will go ahead and eat so out came that beautiful turkey browned to perfection. Admer started to carve the turkey and everyone could see it was not done. He gave each of us a helping but not one word from anyone about it being raw. I have never seen a family where no word of criticism was ever spoken at the table except that one. If that had been at our house, the remarks would have been loud and clear. We filled up on everything else but I always felt cheated because of that raw turkey. During the depression you didn't have turkey every day.

The depression was still on. Mrs. Miller had died, Admer lost his job, two of the teenagers had married, so the family broke up their home and came back to Ruskin - under protest. This was just before the Second World War. Clara and two of the teenagers were in the Miller home at Thanksgiving time. The family planned a big Thanksgiving dinner with all the family including the ones living in Tampa.

It was one of the coldest days I remember in Florida. The house only had fire places for heat, except in the kitchen which had a little wood heater. Everyone brought something and of course, there was a lot of milling around in the kitchen. Lester wanted to do something so he kept putting wood in the little stove in the kitchen until it was so hot you couldn't stand it in there. One cousin came with a guest and a bottle of olives. "Oh, well, there is always one in the best of well reputed families," as Mother used to say. You should have seen her and her guest put away the food they didn't bring. Everyone had all they could eat and the next morning the frost was like snow.

That was the last time the family got together with the Millers as Admer bot a job, and the family went back to New York. The heirs then gave the Miller home to the Woman's Club if we could, put a roof on it. Fortunately we had been able to garner something over \$500.00 and that put a roof on it. Then we borrowed money and fixed up the outside plaster that had come off around the windows. We have been fixing it up ever since and this summer have just finished the second floor. It has been made a Historical Site.

This is a Thanksgiving Story not a Woman's Club story. It has been a beautiful day and now I'll go out and find something to eat. Then tomorrow I'll start to reduce.