

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Traditional Gratitude!

By Kathryn Wishlow

The week leading into this last Thanksgiving weekend was epic! Especially, weatherize! Although there have been previous years with more spectacular colours, there were still beautiful vistas everywhere. Judging by the hordes of traffic going past my corner last week, this town benefited from the visitors taking in those views. For many of the people I know in Ontario, this is their favourite time of the year for a multitude of reasons.

Personally, I am always in favour of the "no biting" bug times accompanied by such decent weather. (now, if the darn wasps would just leave me alone when I am outside enjoying the sun) But, this is always the time of year when I reflect back on just how this last summer has gone. During quiet moments, there is a grateful and peaceful feeling that starts to creep into my consciousness. I am mentally preparing for Thanksgiving.

So, plans for a family gathering at Thanksgiving were formed, fell apart, then reformed. Finally it looked like the intimate dinners of the last few years with our inner circle, were being replaced by people scattering in different directions to catch up with previously missed connections. I had no choice, but to be okay with that.

I gave up trying to make it happen the way I wantedit was like herding cats! After all, getting everyone's schedules to jive with friends, families and in-laws has always been a challenge for special occasions. The difference this year? My attitude. I decided to be grateful that I even had a family. I decided to try and "let go" of all of the old traditions that meant so much to me.

Last year, my son and his wife hosted the family Thanksgiving dinner since with the new baby, it was easier to have it at their house. They wanted to start a "new tradition". So, they served a fabulous prime rib roast, and all of the trimmings. My daughter brought a green bean casserole, and the mashed rutabaga reminded us of past traditional vegetables. Dinner was delicious! It was wonderful just being together. The camaraderie, the laughter, the catching up, the story telling ... it did not matter what we ate, right? That is what I told myself.

Wrong! I missed a juicy turkey with piles of dressing, and mashed potatoes drowning in gravy on my plate. For a gazillion years, the smell of my homemade cranberry sauce simmering on the stove filled the house. That is, after the pumpkin pie and the apple pie had already been baked. Call me crazy, but I always enjoyed the repetition of our family's traditional Thanksgiving feasts.

When I reflect back to my childhood, and Thanksgivings at my grandparent's house, I realize that what I was *really* missing, were the people that went with all of those traditions. I miss my job of stirring the gravy for my Grandma to get out all of the lumps. I miss watching Grandpa putting slices of sharp, cheddar cheese on his hot, apple pie. What I would not give, to see my Mother walking in with her special green bean casserole loaded with mushrooms, again.

Why do traditions mean so much to us? Is it the nostalgic illusion of being able to hang on tightly to what we love, even though we know logically that we cannot, and everything changes constantly? This time of year was designated as a time to reap the rewards of the summer growing season, and be grateful for the harvest. Maybe we can experience more satisfaction, if we remember that Thanksgiving is all about "giving thanks," or being grateful. And this year, I am expressing my gratitude for "past" traditions, and my appreciation for "new" traditions!

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc., a group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all facets of writing, editing and publishing literary efforts. Follow them on Facebook or www.whitepinewriters.ca)