

## Thanksgiving Memories

11/25/24

One would think that, with a tiny family, you might contract a large meal such as a Thanksgiving feast, but that certainly was not true in my home growing up. There were the three of us, my grandfather, my mother and me. Thanksgiving dinner always included "Aunt Martha." Aunt was only a polite way children addressed unrelated but close adults. She was actually Martha Ford. She had been a neighbor of my grandparents when the family lived on Windsor Place when my mother was a child. The families were close and Ford's daughter Kitty was my mother's best friend. By the time I came along, Mr. Ford as well my grandmother had both died and both the remaining parents had moved from Windsor Place, but they remained life-long friends.

As a result of this friendship, there were four of us for the big turkey meal. On the morning of Thanksgiving, everyone was busy with their tasks and the house was beginning to smell delicious. My mother's job was making the stuffing and my grandfather took over getting the bird into the oven. (I still use the same stuffing recipe and always get down her big wooden bowl. I'm guessing my grandmother used the same bowl for her stuffing before my mom. Those holiday traditions really are persistent.) I think Mom made the pie, but my grandfather could also make excellent pie crust. I think he was in charge of the mashed potatoes, mixed in the substantial commercial Kitchen Aide Mixer, purchased years before for my grandmother's commercial candy making business which, sadly, died with her within a year of launching their new business. There were also the vegetables to be prepared. My mother was in charge of making the gravy. It was always perfect.

Years later my step-father, Nicholas Kost, said he could have married her for the gravy!

The kitchen was a choreography of tasks between my mother and grandfather. I certainly watched and absorbed, but I can't remember ever having a hand in the preparations. I certainly knew how to make a turkey when it came to doing it as an adult, so I must have been processing everything.

My role in these busy preparations was to create the ambience by setting the table plus greeting and entertaining our guest. I took great pleasure in getting out the 'good' china from the china cabinet, picking out the silverware, selecting and spreading the white table cloth and placing the napkins. My mother had taught me the 'proper' way to arrange all of these things and I took pride in doing it just right. I often made special place markers or center pieces to add to the sense of the season.

I'm trying to remember if alcohol was ever involved. My grandfather, having been a bar tender in his early married life, could mix up an excellent cocktail and did so whenever his nieces came over to visit, but I don't recall that happening when Aunt Martha was the guest. I don't think that there was even wine on the table. Come to think of it, I don't recall ever seeing Aunt Martha imbibe.

As our kids were growing up, we celebrated a traditional Thanksgiving although it might not have actually been celebrated on the day, depending on the needs of the kids to be elsewhere. In recent years, we generally celebrate Thanksgiving with our son Ian, his wife Layla, and my daughter Casey, now that she has returned to Wisconsin from Alaska. Although we celebrate at Ian and Layla's house, I make the

turkey and bring it over there. They live only a few minutes away by car from us. Layla, Ian and Casey do the rest. Layla grew up with her aunt preparing the turkey for the Coleman thanksgivings so she didn't get the chance to watch and learn as a youngster. She asked me to show her one time which I did. I'm sure she could manage it, but the task falls to me as of now and I really enjoy the task. That is the plan for this year and will probably remain the routine while we continue to live so close together. It has created a good family tradition.