

Community Comment
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Sam Pennisi

Giving Thanks

The year is speeding past. This coming week is the Thanksgiving Week. It's certainly one of my favorite holidays. In my Italian family, it was all about the food; but then again, what wasn't! We had the traditional American menu as far as I knew. We always compared the various foods we enjoyed with family, friends, and school mates. Ours included something Italian in addition to the turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, sweet potatoes, and cranberries. Even though this meal would cry out for a white wine, our table always had a red. And we kids could sip it at an early age.

We enjoyed a mid day meal and played a little front yard football. We watched football on television and especially enjoyed those games that were played in the snow. In L A we didn't see snow that often. Mom did all the cooking since she had three boys in the house. But we did the clean up when we got old enough. She still put everything away and we all looked forward to leftovers the next day or two.

Thanksgiving was one of the few times I remember when we would say grace before dinner. My family was Catholic but this was not a daily occurrence for us. But we did on Thanksgiving. And it was my Dad that would talk about being thankful.

~~My father was orphaned during the depression. Extended family helped as they could but he spent too much time on the streets. That led him to go to work in the CCC; the Civilian Conservation Corps. He found himself transported from his home city of Omaha, Nebraska to Roseburg, Oregon. He never said this that I recall, but it seemed he was most Thankful for this part of his life. He had a strong work ethic from his parents but they died when he was young. He gave credit to the CCC's for learning the value of work.~~

He would ask my brother and I to think about things and people that we were thankful for. As kids, I guess, we had to be asked. Many meals in my house were not always happy occasions but Thanksgiving always was. My Dad got a four day weekend and no stores were open on Thanksgiving. We spent the day together. One of my most vivid memories was that awful week when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. The terrible sense of what might happen next. The televised shooting of the assassin. The funeral in all it's pomp and detail. The son, at about two, saluting his father. The boots backward on a black horse.

This was all somehow personal; family. And then the question of what would happen to the country. What we saw was the promise of America occurring before our eyes. The seamless transferring of power to the Vice President in a plane in Texas. We discovered that this system of ours works. But we were reminded that a system is not enough. It

takes people who are dedicated to honoring our system to make it happen. Men and women stepped up to the plate, set their egos aside, and did the right thing according to our system.

This Thanksgiving I am grateful for many things. My life, my wife and children, and now grandchildren. This community we have made and live in. And this country that has given all of us the gift of opportunity. That is the real American dream.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment, Happy Thanksgiving.