

The blessings keep coming!

Thanksgiving 2007

Thanksgiving morning and our world is good. We have so much to be thankful for besides the obvious family, friends, and health. Our tummies are full of plenty of sausage and biscuits as Jim and I, along with our houseguests, Harold and Ola, drive down Fort Avenue; gold and crimson leaves “snow” over us and skitter across the newly-blacktopped street. A brisk wind flutters sunlit American flags. An elderly man shuffles along the sidewalk, purposely stirring up rustling leaves. I think he is reliving his childhood, remembering the joyous days of burrowing through piles of Nature’s crunchy carpet with his laughing neighborhood buddies. Ah, yes, our world is good/our life is good.

A long stop at my favorite-in-all-the-world store, Accents, (This is a flag and “junk” store...you know the kind of “junk” that you would love to own one of everything but you honestly can live quite nicely without.) yields a couple of bright red cardinals for our tree and a mindful of “pretties” for our hearts. The store owner is a special lady and we enjoy our chats with her. More reason to be thankful today.



Thick gray clouds nudge the sun from view as we travel down Route 29 South but the leaves pay no mind to the changing light. They continue their age-old traditional voyage to the waiting cool earth. My mind drifts back to Thanksgivings of my youth. Life was good then too. Most times the noon meal was at either our house or at the Cornelius or Gerloff homes.



This was taken in about 1948 at my parents' home northeast of German Valley. The three young boys are Donald, Elgin and Merle Cornelius. The man with the pipe is Dick Cornelius. My mom stands next to Dick and my dad is the tall man without a hat. The others are Art and Grace Gerloff and their son and daughter-in-law Odell and Joyce. Maynard Cornelius stands behind Elgin. The shrimp in front is me.



I think this was taken at Grace and Art Gerloff's house when they lived just east of Red Oak. The lady in the striped dress far left is Grace Gerloff, next is me; next in the plaid dress looks like Harriet (Mrs. Harold) Gerloff. That's my mom in the center. Far right with the gray hair is my Gramma Pieper. The other two I cannot ID but I'm guessing the lady in plaid is Art's sister (Ardie Kemper) and possibly the gal with her back to us is Joyce (Mrs. Odell) Gerloff. I love the fly swatter hanging beside the door in the corner. The cupboard door is still hanging open. And, do you notice, the women sat at one table at holiday meals and the men at a different one. That's just the way it was back then. I'm guessing this was about 1950.



My best guess, considering the background, is that this was taken at a holiday dinner at the Cornelius house on Bunker Hill Road north of German Valley. That's my dad in the middle left and the man far left looks like it might have been Art Gerloff. The back of the head sure looks like Maynard Cornelius. Dick Cornelius is in the center, then Don and Merle Cornelius.

One such day will forever remain in my mind. The Gerloffs had PUPPIES!!!! And I can still feel the warmth of Smokie snuggled under my coat as we rode home in the back seat of Dad's gray '38 Buick.

Often the Saturday after Thanksgiving found our house filled to capacity with the Manke relatives from Chicago. Oh, such excitement with all the cooking and cleaning and bustle of getting ready for all that company! They were such nice people and they were really good at giving hugs.



Life was so good those days.

The clock in my heart fast-forwards me to the 60's and 70's when my five little blondes were very much involved in every holiday. Well I remember the year four kids came home from school the day before Thanksgiving, each sporting a nifty new case of chicken pox --- so much for eating turkey at my folks' home the next day. That's Mom's 1975 diary entry below:

NOVEMBER 26

*cold and icky out
I baked rolls, bread cake lemon
pumpkin & custard pie
Linda called 2 kids have the
chicken pox
Linda called 30 mins latter
4 kids got chicken pox so
that didn't them not to come
tomorrow
Boy it's snowing hard
tonight
I just don't know where
to plot to do but wait
and see what morn ing
brings*

Randy had settled his account with Mr. Pox two weeks earlier so he thought it was great fun to see his four siblings peppered. There was a heavy snowfall that night and Larry was able to convince us that he was healthy enough to cruise the hayfield on the John Deere snowmobile. Despite the turmoil, life was good.

My heart-clock zips ahead to 1999 and I am on Cindy and Freddie's front porch with a tablet, making lists. The decision had been made that I would move to Virginia early in 2000. Oh, how the adrenaline was flowing as I made my plans and tried to "THINK OF EVERYTHING".

A few days later I was flying out of Roanoke toward Illinois and it struck me that this was the last time home would be west of Virginia. Despite the upheaval and uproar, life was very good. (The decision to move to Virginia was excellent....and that was true even before I met Jim.)

Now the clock moves to 2005. Jim and I are in Bedford, New Hampshire, at Larry and Ellen's home. Yet another heavy snowfall blanketed the New England world and I experienced the joy of playing in the snow with precious Emma and Anna.



My heart was dancing and life was good.

But this is 2007 and today our life is filled with love and peace. We visit Jim's Aunt Thelma at the nursing home and find her in a new room. She has a friendly new roommate now and her improvement is evident. It feels so good to see her laugh again. She has not done that for a long time.



This makes our life even better!

Cindy and Freddie's home is teeming with relatives and friends and the aroma of turkey and pumpkin pie. Everyone gathers in the kitchen as Jim asks the Blessing and then, in the American tradition, we all eat way too much. The rest of the day is spent doing the things families do best -- reminiscing and gossiping and joking.

We are having a late fall in Virginia this year so the trees are still glorious; leaves still carpet the front lawn.



Freddie, armed with his trusty leaf blower, is a very popular fellow as he makes a huge mound of leaves happen. Don't you just know, seven little kids are only too happy to rearrange that pile as cameras record the riotous melee for later scrapbooks? Yesterday Abby lost a shoe in one such pile so she is a bit more careful today.

The sun is setting as we and our beloved houseguests head back to Heath Avenue. That's Harold and Ola below:



Harold and Jim read and doze while Ola and I sit in comfortable companionship in the kitchen, sharing our best ideas for solving the world's ills as we pick pecans out of shells (thirty four pounds of those little jewels she brought me!).

It has been a long, happy day. Thank you, God, for another good year with the people I cherish. My world is colored with love and peace. Ah, life is good and I am so very blessed!