

CRIBB<S> NOTES – NOVEMBER 22, 2009

Thanksgiving is one of my most favorite days of the year. It has not always been that way. In fact, for many years I dreaded Thanksgiving. It was a day of being away from my family and doing news stories about people whose lives were shattered and devastated by violence.

Thanksgiving was not always a happy occasion. It was a day of pain and great suffering. I do not remember the number of times scanners in newsrooms blared with urgent dispatches for emergency assistance to homes where things went terribly wrong. Too often I received the assignment to chase the sirens. It usually happened during mid-afternoon when families were gathered and too much alcohol had been consumed. Instead of loved ones offering prayers of thanksgiving, hardened feelings exploded into episodes of familial disaster.

But, there was one Thanksgiving Day when my assignment editor sent me out to find what may be considered a “traditional” Thanksgiving. I went in search of the “Norman Rockwell portrait of Thanksgiving.” It took hours of driving with a camera crew through the neighborhoods of San Francisco and knocking on doors before a family welcomed us into their home.

We could not have scripted the setting any more perfectly. The scent of delicious food wafted from the kitchen to the front door. Children and adults scurried throughout the house and the sounds of busy activity drowned the din from the streets. It seemed like a miracle to have found such a lively home with people completely engaged in the holiday motif.

For their part, the appearance of a television news team at their home was an unexpected joy. They had planned to celebrate Thanksgiving in a manner that was familiar and common to them. They were a Jewish family who had a tradition of coming together for food, fun, and a time to express their gratitude and appreciation for the blessings they had received. Thanksgiving was a meaningful day. Their home was filled with love and a table full of delightful dishes right down to the roasted turkey as its centerpiece.

For our part, we managed to capture the details of their preparation and the hurried manner in which they moved from the kitchen to the dining room table to place each item in its proper place. And, on cue, when it was time for them to sit down and eat, our lights went on, our camera rolled, and our in-studio news anchor tossed to me for a live shot to report our story on Thanksgiving.

It was a great Thanksgiving. No violence. No bad news. One family was doing what President Abraham Lincoln, no doubt, had in mind in 1863 when he made Thanksgiving Day a national tradition. It did not become a federal holiday in the United States until 1941.

I like Thanksgiving Day because it means our family comes together to enjoy a sacred time. We are reminded of God’s boundless bounty and our ability “to live simply so others can simply live.” We give thanks for life, family, friendship, and the harvest that feeds our bodies and our souls. HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

-Pastor Art Cribbs