

Thanksgiving Reflections

Category: Stories

written by Pulse Team | November 28, 2008

Pulse Writers and Editors

Editor's Note: This Thanksgiving tugs hard at the emotions. While an economic gale roils the world, our freshly chosen captain stands on deck, pointing out a new direction for our battered ship of state. At the same time, each of us has personal joys and sorrows to contemplate. We asked Pulse's writers and editors to take a moment to share their reflections.

This year, I am thankful for my four quirky little grandsons, my three loving children and my beloved husband of almost forty years. I am especially thankful that the country we share has a chance to find its way again and to call all of us, young and old, toward a future that can still be bright and full of promise. *—Johanna Shapiro*

I'm thankful for my daughter, and for how she kicks and growls in delight when I enter her room at 6 a.m. *—Joanne Wilkinson*

As one who came of political age in the 1960s, I remember as only a young man can the losses of JFK, RFK and MLK. As an older man, I'm all too aware of the fragility of any single human life. But I will be grateful this Thanksgiving for the resurrection of hope, and of a revolutionary spirit I haven't experienced in over forty years. *—Rick Flinders*

In my sixties, after a decade marked by loss (my husband, my sister, both parents, several friends) and change (home, job, rhythm of life), I find myself waking up and going to sleep with the words "Thank you" as my only prayer. I don't know where this gratitude comes from, what it's for or to whom or what it's directed. I only know that it's my response to this life and carries me through each day with a keen sense of wonder. *—Veneta Masson*

I decided to ask my 13-year-old son Sean, who has autism, what he is thankful for. He made a list:

1. I'm thankful that my birthday is before my dad's.
2. I'm thankful that my shoe size is now 10 1/2 and dad's is only 9.
3. I'm thankful that my hand is bigger than daddy's.
4. I'm thankful that I can beat my daddy at arm wrestling (I let him win sometimes).
5. I'm thankful that I can play the drums and the trumpet and my dad can't.
6. I'm thankful that I can swim faster than my dad.
7. I'm thankful that my mom and dad will make a turkey for me on Thanksgiving.

(Thanks, Sean! I hope there aren't too many growth spurts left. ☐ *—John Harrington*

This past week, one of our first-year medical students died—a suicide. We're all in shock, and the students, in particular, are devastated. This event took me to a lot of sad places, including the time that I was severely depressed and nearly ended my life. Today I am grateful for those who were there when I needed them and helped me put my life back together: my wife Marsha, Dr. Jim Zettel and, in their own inimitable way, my children Annie and Tom. —*Warren Holleman*

A haiku:

our life on the bay—
waves washed with sun, rain, or fog,
grateful for it all.

—*Neal Whitman and Elaine Weiss*

I'm most thankful this year that we elected a man who is intelligent and articulate, believes in social justice and appears to reject preemptive war and torture. Yes, change has come to America, thank God. —*Barry Thompson*

I am so thankful for my two kids (Alice, 11, and Jimmie, 8) and for their understanding and gentleness. Alice and Jimmie often offer to give me a massage when my back hurts at the end of the day. For me, hearing "Mommy, is this the right spot?" or "How about this spot, Mommy?" is better than any medication. —*Jan Qiu*

I am thankful that my family and I have our health and are happy in our pursuits, and that I still love practicing medicine. We are also thankful that we have a new president who demonstrates competence and vision and offers us hope for the future. —*Sandy Brown*

I am thankful for the good brain chemistry that enables me to get through pain and suffering by listening to my favorite music. This year, I am especially thankful to the American people for electing Barack Obama and to the Pulitzer Prize people for giving Bob Dylan a special award! —*Beth Hadas*

I would simply like to offer a prayer and thanks for all things dear and familiar, which was my personal prayer on 9/11/01. —*Ann Weiss*

Here are people and things I'm thankful for:

My maternal grandmother for her advice about parenting: "Do the best you can, and hope they don't end up in prison."

My paternal grandmother for her advice about wealth: "It's not very far from corn pone to plum pudding, but it's a long way back."

My mother for her advice about love: "Don't be kissing at the gate. Love may be blind, but the neighbors ain't."

And my son (then age 8) for his advice about fatherhood: "You're a lot nicer since you quit delivering babies." —*John Scott*

I am especially thankful to Pulse for making a home for stories and poems in and about medicine. —*Howard Stein*

My mother taught me so much, so early and so unknowingly (on my part). The teaching was like a lovely redbird in flight. I often stop and wonder, "Where did that come from?" My flights of fancy and creativity and my grounding in solid values go right back to that dear source, my mother. I was blessed.

Early Bird Preparation

This morning from the kitchen window
I watch the redbird come and go.
Though night hangs dark on my shoulders,
I recall my mother saying it was
☒ good luck, seeing a redbird.
I believed her then and believe her now.
When I kneel to pray, to say thank you,
I think of her and luck. Grateful to her.

I have had big agendas and laptop plans,
Drunk champagne flying first class, spitting
out marketing templates with ease, photos of
husband, daughter, grandsons in a briefcase.
☒ Oh! I was flying then!
But when I kneel to pray, to say thank you,
I am grateful to her for seeing what is real.
Grateful to her for luck and good preparation.

—*Judy Schaefer*