

2nd Opinion: This Thanksgiving, take nothing for granted

November 23, 2015

Thanksgiving is approaching. Our family is planning a big event. Our celebrations have thinned a bit the last few years. However, one of my cousins took his life a few weeks ago, and we decided we need to gather more intentionally this year.



David Bowman We are celebrating my parents' 55th wedding anniversary also. They wouldn't allow us to throw a Golden Anniversary party, but they are open to an extra cake this time. Dad's declining health may have something to do with that. Either way, I look forward to raising a glass of iced tea in their honor.

Additionally, we have the delight of welcoming our son's fiancée to Texas as she prepares to marry into our family of misfits and outcasts. She's a California girl. She never has experienced the backwoods lifestyle of our clan. This should be fun.

An empty chair and precious memories await us as we gather in Mom and Dad's log cabin in the northeast Texas countryside. I'm hoping it's cool

enough for a fire in the centrally located wood stove. We will dine on the best paper plates money can buy. We will consume more than we should. We will nap as the Cowboys try, try, try to start a winning streak. We will putter around Dad's shop. We'll check out the remnants of the summer garden. We'll admire Mom's latest artwork.

We will feel a loss we cannot fully explain. Not much will get said about it, and nothing will find resolution. We will grieve again a most curious departure. We will remember.

On Thanksgiving some years ago, sleet covered the Texas Stadium field. The Cowboys lost to the Dolphins that day when Leon Lett didn't let things be. On that day, my cousin and I had an uncomfortable discussion about a deep trauma in his life. He never got over that event. He never stopped looking over his shoulder.

Look around the room during your Thanksgiving feast. Whose hand do you need to hold tightly during the blessing? Whose chair could be empty next year? Who needs an uncomfortable discussion with you now? Who do you need to love and appreciate as if this were the last opportunity to gather like this until we all get to heaven?

We are going to celebrate life. We are going to celebrate family. We are going to celebrate milestones. We will laugh and weep and pray. We will give thanks.

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