

## **Sacrificing tradition for a future**

By David Hunter

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Cheryl and I bought our current home in 1986 and since then it has become the center of Hunter Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Our three grandchildren have never known any other Hunter holiday gathering place.

Nobody has ever been required to be here, nor have there been hurt feelings when some just couldn't make it, but through the years most of our children and grandchildren have managed to get by for at least a quick meal and visit at Thanksgiving and usually Christmas.

The meal is never spectacular, just home-cooking with some items that we would only change at our own peril because, according to our grandchildren, "they have always been the same," served buffet style off the island in the center of our kitchen.

Occasionally, we have made small changes, but never the standards – turkey and dressing (the Stove Top brand is preferred, though Cheryl occasionally makes the real thing.); cranberry jelly, not salad made from cranberries; potato salad of our own private variety, sort of German style, but not quite; deviled eggs; sweet potatoes with marshmallow; green beans (but never green-bean casserole); turkey gravy and a variety of pies – always to include chocolate, pumpkin, pecan and cherry, washed down with iced tea, coffee and soft drinks.

Through the years, we have added the occasional pot roast or ham, but the turkey is a must for Thanksgiving. On occasion, a cake turns up, but we are pie people, and new types of pie are permissible.

Through the years, the family circle grew, but the size of the kitchen didn't. It never mattered, though. There were card tables and the spillover went to the living room. The gatherings grew larger and generally included a dog or two waiting to be served. We all expected Thanksgiving and Christmas to be the same forever.

Then Covid 19 came along. No law or mandate was needed to modify our behavior because we are intelligent people and we paid attention to what the scientists told us, not the politicians. Only small gatherings have occurred here since the pandemic started, with safety practices observed and those occasions have been few.

Nobody had to remind me that I am the weak link in family gatherings, eight years older than Cheryl who still works but in a small office with few visitors. I also have a long list of ailments making me prone to becoming seriously ill and less likely to survive the Covid 19 virus if I'm infected.

My family members closed ranks around me early on, making certain that I don't go into public unless it couldn't be avoided. My trips out of the house have been far and few between, and even in the early days of the pandemic, with only a few visitors, I was encouraged to hang out in my own room with food carried to me.

This year, there will be no Thanksgiving gathering with food piled high on the island in the kitchen and people and pets stepping over each other – and it's not because we are living in fear. Common sense is not fear, but common sense.

Among other things considered this year was the fact that our Granddaughter Grace is expected to deliver our first Great-granddaughter (Malia) in January, and I want to be here to meet her as much as Grace wants me to be here to tell her wild stories and teach her to "look it up" rather than taking everything at face value – as I have done with all my children and grandchildren.

Grace has already survived a terrifying bout of Covid 19 in the second trimester of her pregnancy and I'm looking forward to meeting Malia and hanging around to tell her wild stories about trees causing the wind to blow by moving and that the scars on my forearms are the result of combat with a Tyrannosaurus Rex, as I once convinced my younger Granddaughter Sydney.

Hopefully, at least one vaccine will be available by next year, which I will get as soon as possible, perhaps to put the most of this pandemic nightmare behind us. Yep, I will trust this vaccine just as I have trusted the polio vaccine, small pox vaccine, rabies vaccine, assorted other inoculations and all the flu vaccines I've used every year.

As I said, common sense is just common sense. If it doesn't work out and I should become infected with Covid 19, I'll be taking a lot of grand memories with me when I go.

I'll go with the common sense every time, though. Instead of politicians lying through their teeth for their own benefit. And hopefully, next year we'll all be here to gather around the same boring buffet we've had for years.

Amen?