

THANKSGIVING

By JAMES COLLINS

Family is everything and Thanksgiving was always a meeting of the clan. New York expatriates to New Hampshire, we were in the forefront of a family relocation to New England. Our family of six moved with a relocated NY company and the rest of the family dispersed to NY, NJ and CT. The clan was originally housed in apartments in NY, and we were the first to buy a house in NY so we held the annual Thanksgiving soiree. Fifteen was the normal attendance in NY but the first year in NH it dropped to fourteen. The trip was too much for some of the elders. From then on the tribe increased. Marriages, births and fiancées added to the clan and twenty-two was the norm for several years. Placing the tables became a massive jig saw puzzle and the year we reached twenty-seven was challenging. Several tables were butted together like a disorganized freight train. They crossed the kitchen and the breakfast area diagonally and then made a dog leg into the dining room. Two turkeys and two turkey breasts were needed to fill the demand while beer and wine flowed for hours. Before and after dinner, impromptu soccer, touch football and basketball games started, spluttered and faded away but there were gales of laughter. The dinner normally spanned five hours and started after all returned from the traditional Turkey Day football game played in Nashua. Cars were parked everywhere and the music blared up and down the street for all to hear.

At the table everyone participated and all spoke at the same time. No Roberts Rules existed that day. A once brand new fiancée said she waited patiently for one half hour for a gap in the discussion to present an idea. It never happened. She said she finally learned to jump right in and vocally overpower those on either side to be heard. The hardest to overpower was my mother-in-law who never gave in to anybody. She was the Matriarch and she was in charge. Luckily she liked her beer or wine and when she stopped for a sip she was by passed and then tried to reacquire the audience. Fortunately twenty-seven people require more than twenty feet of table so we put her at one end and the soft spoken outsiders at the other.

As new families formed with their own celebrations, the numbers fell back from the high water mark. Now we're back to twenty-two and the next generation hosts the event. The food is still great, the company marvelous, the conversations memorable and the liquor is sufficient. The kids all look forward to the event and expect it to continue forever. I hope it does.

THE END