

Thanksgiving Memories

The first year Kristen & Troy were married, we were all invited to have Thanksgiving dinner at their home in Crystal Falls. Dave & I drove up from Black River, and Joel & Annette drove up from their apartment in Madison, Wisconsin. Sharon and Helen drove up from Grand Rapids. Because of work schedules, we all arrived on Thursday and delayed Thanksgiving Dinner until Friday. Sharon and Helen stayed in the spare bedroom, and the rest of us stayed in the little rental cottage next door to their house.

Before we arrived, I asked Kristen if they had a roasting pan. She said Troy had found one downstairs, left by the previous owner. When it was time to put the turkey in the oven, I asked Troy to get the pan. He presented me with an enamel canner, not a roaster! He looked somewhat crestfallen when I told him of the difference. Because he looked so disappointed, I decided that the type of pan didn't make that much difference as long as it fit in the oven. It did! So the turkey cooked just fine in a canner and made delicious gravy because the liquids covered about half the turkey!

Also invited to this dinner were Kristen's friend Diane from the Humane Society and her boyfriend Dave (we called him "Diane's loser boyfriend Dave" – referred to in the rest of this story as DLBD). DLBD managed to drink an inordinate number of beers, cracking open one after another. It's possible he consumed a 12-pack before dinner. Troy, Dave and Joel made a valiant effort to match him, beer for beer, but failed. Diane has an extreme number of dogs, mostly Dobermans, and told story after story about their escapades. One story was about DLBD trying to stop a dogfight and getting seriously chewed up. DLBD and Diane thought it was funny. I was mostly horrified. But I have to say, the dinner conversation was fascinating and funny. We laughed and ate and enjoyed ourselves immensely.

Dessert was yummy, too. We had pies, and Troy even ate a piece of apple pie because his grandma made it. (I learned very quickly that Troy didn't care for fruit, raw or cooked.)

The next day everyone (except Diane & DLBD who wobbled home after dinner) sat around the living room and played the game of Balderdash, where one person draws a card with an obscure word definition on it, and the rest of the players have to make up another definition for that word. All the definitions are gathered together, including the correct one, and read out loud by the person with the card. Points were given for guessing the correct definition, and also if your made-up definition was the picked as the correct one. I think we spent a couple of hours playing that game, laughing the whole time. For some reason, the word "davenport" sticks in my mind, and many of us almost fell off the "davenport" because we were laughing so hard. I was pleased to see that Troy enjoyed playing games, a necessary quality for a son-in-law in our family.

All in all, it was a wonderful thanksgiving celebration of new family and friends. I treasure and give thanks for all these memories.

Thanksgiving 2006 was also spent with Kristen and Troy. They were going to deep-fry a turkey for dinner and Troy had purchased all the necessary equipment, including a deep fryer and propane tank, and a 5 gallon drum of peanut oil. I had never fixed a deep-fried turkey, and was getting nervous about having the turkey ready at the same time as all the other food. The directions said that a 15 pound turkey took 50 minutes to cook, and I was totally skeptical.

Some friends were also coming for dinner, including Troy's very best friend, Charlie Gullen (his wife Ginger had to work), and their friends from Oldenburg Lakeshore, Mike and Angela Schindler and their two little daughters, Anna and Cecelia. Kristen's Grandma VanderLinde also drove up from Frankfort, Michigan to celebrate the holiday (Kristen's Grandpa VanderLinde was in the nursing home at this time).

About an hour before dinner, Dave and Troy went out on the front lawn to set up the fryer. The ground was cold, but not frozen, and there wasn't a speck of snow. The oil was poured into the big stainless steel pot, and the propane tank was hooked up. Troy turned on the propane and Dave tried to light the burner. It wouldn't stay lit. They switched places. Dave turned on the propane, and Troy tried to light the burner. Still wouldn't stay lit. Troy took the burner and regulator apart. He couldn't find anything wrong. He hooked it back up again. Same routine - wouldn't stay lit. Troy took it apart again and went to the tool bench in the garage. Dave came in the kitchen, wondering about possibly cooking the turkey in the oven. Yipes! Dinner guests arriving in less than 45 minutes and the turkey not even started. I was preparing for a possible dinner disaster.

Troy to the rescue! He drilled out the tube in the gas regulator so the propane could flow freely. The fryer stayed lit, the oil was heated to the proper temperature, and the turkey was carefully placed in the pot. While the turkey bubbled away outside, the kitchen aromas of rolls, potatoes and dressing greeted the dinner guests. By the time everyone arrived and the children had a chance to chase the cats around, the turkey was done! It really did cook in 50 minutes, much to my surprise. And it was delicious! Thanks to Troy, the fix-it man.