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The Thanksgiving Blessing

By LeAnn R. Ralph

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by: **LeAnn R. Ralph**

"Wouldn't you just know it," muttered my husband, Randy.

We had already been driving for a couple of hours in a pickup truck that we had borrowed from a friend, and now it was completely dark.

"What's wrong?" I asked sleepily. I had dozed off only a few minutes ago.

"It's starting to rain," Randy replied, as he reached over to turn on the windshield wipers.

Rain? In a few seconds, I came fully awake. If it was raining, that meant Mom and Dad's furniture was getting wet.

So far, it had been my worst Thanksgiving ever. Dad had passed away a month ago. My mother had died seven years earlier. When I was a kid, we always celebrated Thanksgiving at home. All four of my grandparents had died before I was born, and to me, Thanksgiving meant celebrating the holiday with Mom and Dad. But now, for the very first time in my whole life, all thirty-four years of it, there had been no one to spend Thanksgiving with at my parents' place.

Randy and I did, however, have plenty of work to do at Mom and Dad's house. A family wanted to rent it, and we needed to have it cleaned out by Christmas. Randy and I had been married for a little less than six months, and this was hardly the way that I had wanted us to spend our first Thanksgiving as a married couple. And yet, I knew it was no use waiting. That if we waited it wouldn't bring either of my parents back. But cleaning out the house seemed so final. The end of a lifetime. The end of two lifetimes. I simply wasn't ready. Although, if I were going to be honest with myself, I knew I probably never would be "ready."

We had decided to take some of Mom and Dad's furniture home with us. My parents' house was in west central Wisconsin, and my husband I lived two-hundred-and-fifty miles away in the southern part of the state.

After we had loaded the first piece of furniture into the pickup truck we had borrowed, Mom and Dad's bedroom looked very empty without the dresser that they'd had for as long as I could remember. In the top dresser drawer, my mother had kept some of her keepsakes, including a strand of blond hair. When I was a kid and had gotten my hair cut short, Mom wanted to save some of it. Dad's drawer held a few keepsakes too. His old pocket watch, for one thing. Dad always carried a pocket watch. He had been a farmer, and he said a wristwatch would never survive the hardships of farm work (dust and water, grease and oil).

In addition to the dresser, we had taken Mom's cherry wood buffet. My mother had stored her tablecloths and what she referred to as her "good dishes" in the buffet. Randy and I were also bringing home the chest-of-drawers that I'd had since I was a little girl. Although the middle drawer looks like two separate drawers, it is actually one big drawer. When I was growing up, I had been fascinated by the design and had used the big drawer for storing my sweaters.

But now, after we had so carefully loaded the furniture and strapped it into the back of the truck, it was raining, which meant everything was all going to end up ruined.

No, wait a minute. The furniture was not going to get wet. We had put a tarp over the load.

"Well, at least we've got a tarp," I said to my husband. By this time, it was raining so hard the windshield wipers couldn't keep up, even on high.

Randy shook his head. "The tarp won't help much unless we tie it down better."

A few minutes later, my husband pulled off at a gas station.

"But what are we going to tie it down WITH?" I asked, as the truck swayed in a gust of wind that hit it broadside. We hadn't counted on wind and rain or that we would need more rope.

Randy smiled. "These," he said, bending down to pull the laces out of his work boots. "If I cut them into pieces, I should have enough to go around."

It was still raining when we arrived home several hours later, so Randy put the truck in the garage. The next day I could hardly believe my eyes when we discovered that the furniture had suffered only a few wet spots here and there, but that nothing had gotten completely soaked.

"What would I do without you?" I said to my husband as I ran my hand over Mom and Dad's dresser. "I never would have thought of shoelaces. Not in a million years."

Randy shrugged. "I couldn't let your mom and dad's furniture get ruined, could I? What kind of a person would I be if I let that happen?"

And just then it dawned on me that even though it had seemed like my worst Thanksgiving ever, I actually had quite a few things to be thankful for. And my husband was right at the top of the list.

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LeAnn R. Ralph is the editor of the Wisconsin Regional Writer (the quarterly publication of the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Assoc.) and is the author of the book: Christmas In Dairyland (True Stories From a Wisconsin Farm) (August 2003). Share the view from Rural Route 2 and celebrate Christmas during a simpler time. Click here to read sample chapters and other Rural Route 2 stories — <http://ruralroute2.com>
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Thankfulness In Times Of Trouble

By Rose DesRochers

Thanksgiving is a time for food celebration and fun. Every year on Thanksgiving, families gather around the table to enjoy a meal and give thanks. But for some folks, Thanksgiving can be a lonely time. Many adults spend the holidays feeling isolated and depressed. In the wake of Katrina's aftermath, this will be the first holiday for many without relatives and friends. In addition many families may be experiencing financial strains.

Today as we celebrate this Thanksgiving, it is important to remember that it's about more than being thankful for one day, it is an entire lifetime. Today is the day to be thankful for all the things in your life, no matter how big they are, or how small. Even in our deepest sorrow, we can find things to be thankful for.

Holidays bring out emotional pain. This time of year can be difficult for any one who has suffered a loss. Should you be missing loved ones this holiday, rejoice in the knowledge that they are with God. Don't push yourself today; allow yourself that time to grieve.

For those who may be feeling depressed this Thanksgiving holiday, open your heart to giving. Helping other people in need is a wonderful way to celebrate the day and may make you feel less alone. Check out communities in your area that may need volunteers during the holidays- example soup kitchens, shelters, hospitals or reach out to your local church.

Life is full of unexpected changes. Death is very much apart of life. Whatever you do today, don't cover up your feelings of depression and isolation. Own up to those feelings and know that you're not alone. Somewhere today, someone is feeling the same way that you are.

Today on this Thanksgiving Day please remember, though the harvest might not always be plentiful, family and friends may be few, God has given us each a great deal to be thankful for. My experience is that, it is much easier to thank God for our blessing than to find a way to be thankful in the midst of our troubles.

I'm thankful that I have the strength to meet the challenges that come with life. I'm thankful for each memory that family and friends have given me. I'm thankful for having a profound understanding that it is more important to give than to receive. This Thanksgiving I have much to be thankful for.

Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.
~W.T. Purkiser

Today be thankful for what you have to give, not just what you have received.

Happy Thanksgiving.

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community for men and women over 18. Their goal is to help writers succeed in the writing industry by offering a useful selection of services including author interviews, regular columns, interactive forums, and a place to share your writing for critique by your peers.

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