

OPAA November Artwalks Column, Suzan Noyes

“The essence of all beautiful art, all great art is gratitude.” Friedrich Nietzsche

The month of November is synonymous with the concept of ‘Gratitude’, prefaced with a capital “G” during the most disturbed year in our lifetime. I’ve counted all the positives in my life. Numbing fatalities of coronavirus, fires, hurricanes, seem far away, difficult to truly feel for people we don’t personally know. A relative or close friend’s grief brings it home fast.

I’m grateful that artists are a special tribe, that I’m always most comfortable around you. Generally, we speak each other’s language. During our Oct. 22nd Zoom Meeting, the subject was ATC’s, but members shared how artistic scraps, papers, art supplies and ephemera collect in stacks in our studios and throughout our homes. Thank you; I’m not the only pack rat! Art enables escape into creative activity. Stress is a killer; artwork puts us on stable ground.

“Silent gratitude isn’t much use to anyone.” Gertrude Stein

Yes, Gert, something to mull over as this difficult, beloved month of 2020 progresses. A good time for some OPAA board members to share thanks and anecdotes with our entire organization. Thanksgiving is widely considered the most familial holiday gathering – sharing food with loved ones is as personal as it gets.

A happy-gavel-thumper from OPAA President Anne Grasteit: “Several years ago we had Thanksgiving plans with a relative way out in the country – but it snowed! Instead, a local niece and her husband came to our house with offerings of food; we shared what was in our refrigerator – the most fun ever! No plans, no fuss, just an impromptu Thanksgiving celebration. I recommend it highly!”

A Turkey-toss from Publicity/Advertising Maven Debbie Young: “Many years ago we lived in Tucson, Arizona. We had made holiday dinner plans with friends about an hour and a half away. My husband volunteered to roast a turkey the night before as our family’s contribution to the feast. I happily agreed! We and the kids slept soundly with that great aroma filling our house... until we awoke to burnt turkey. My husband had started the oven at a high temperature and neglected to lower it – big bird was basically charred bones. Fortunately we found a store with rotisserie chicken and our shared holiday turned out great regardless.”

Vice-President Lorraine Ford dishes up this side: “Our family tradition – holiday dinners were fashioned after formal crystal-and-china-Texas-boarding-house-style, annual occasions where adults and children *remembered* how to sip, not *gulp* from water goblets, used a salad fork properly, and accepted a jiggling slice of cranberry jelly with adoration. Oddly, turkey was not the center of attention. Thanksgiving was heralded by THE GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE, in all its French Fried Onion and Campbell Soup glory.

On Thanksgiving 1987 (our home traditionally spotless), we waited in breathless anticipation of the grandparents’ arrival with THE GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE. Again, in keeping with custom, not a crumb passed our lips while the elders made their slow way “Over the River” (Rio Grande) and “Through the (Cotton)woods”. At long last they arrived. Eagerly we took their coats, seated them at the white-linen bedecked table, gave serious thanks to the Lord, and... *then*, horrified, my mother exclaimed: “Where is my GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE? I forgot to bring THE GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE!”

Our rumbling stomachs would have forgone the pleasure, no discussion necessary. BUT - no CASSEROLE, no Thanksgiving. Our family caved to tradition and dinner was held back another hour for the star of the holiday show to finally arrive. We sat down to dry turkey, liquefied cranberry sauce and (sacrilegious!) lukewarm GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE.”

Lorraine wishes everyone Laughter, Love and Good Memories this Thanksgiving.

Member at Large Melissa Doyel offers a toast: “Every year we practice an odd tradition. Turkey, stuffing and fixings go on the table. As we all sit down to eat it happens...the smell of burning biscuits left in the oven. Each holiday we laugh and say, “Don’t forget the BB’s” – but we do.”

Melissa is grateful for several things this past year. She was able to enjoy a great Mississippi River cruise and made it back home prior to Covid-19 shutting things down. There’s been plenty of food from their garden and orchard – also her husband makes really good bread - and many beautiful local places to walk, which keeps her sane.

Times Past from Board Historian Eva Kozun: “Freak snow and ice storms remain common in Maine. Long ago, I recall one such raging the day before Thanksgiving. Since my kids were home, we invited their friends and began rolling out pie crusts, slicing apples and pumpkins, measuring out sugar and spices. What a mess! Too many pies for my oven, many went home

with parents as they collected their kids. So, I cleaned and prepared for the Big Day. Everything was beautiful inside and out – I was tired but felt abundant gratitude.

Then our power went out. Well, every rural home has a woodstove and cook-top, storm or not. We'd stay warm but I had a feeling Thanksgiving dinner was canceled – this storm promised to be a *recahd breakah*. Forget turkey, what about those pies? We all knew linesmen were working around the clock under freezing, treacherous conditions to restore our power... we'd feed the linesmen, of course! Our friends and families packed backpacks with thermoses of hot drinks, slices of pie – some made sandwiches, hot soup – to share with open hearts, delivered by sled, snowshoes and cross-country skis. We made a lot of folks smile. Gratitude begins with giving, and shared community. Those linesmen responded; ours was the first area where the power came back on.”

Eva thanks all our members who help us learn and grow as artists, inspiring us to travel the miles of effort that it takes to build our artistic skills.

A memorable Thanksgiving for me? Living solo in Bend several years ago, recuperating from years of intense caregiving, including providing every family feast. That year *by choice*, I held Turkey Day-for-One, which included wearing PJ's and binge-watching 'Downton Abbey' from 10 a.m. to about 9 p.m. whereupon I stuck leftovers in the fridge, left the kitchen a mess and crashed and burned. Perfect. PS There was



no GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE, either. On that note I include a photograph of my favorite turkey – my nephew's Weber grill collapsed and he shoved the entire apparatus plus bird onto his gas grill. Not sure why.

“Gratitude is when memory is stored in the heart and not in the mind.” Lionel Hampton

From all of us to all of you, Happy Thanksgiving, Olympic Peninsula Art Association!