

A time for giving thanks with Grace



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

I'll never eat Grace, my dog, for Thanksgiving.

And while this seems too wild to even think about, sometimes you can't state things too clearly in what is the crazy parade of life.

In 2024 it was the cats and so-called single cat ladies getting attention because of kooky American politics. More kookiness (thank you Donald Trump) followed with the dicey claim that dogs are dinner menu items for some American immigrants.

I'm here to say the obvious — for Thanksgiving, turkey is a better option.

We can thank our American cousins for this. Canada stole the Thanksgiving holiday from the Americans in 1879 after Abe Lincoln had officially made Thanksgiving an American holiday 16 years earlier. Canada eventually moved its annual festivity from November to October in 1957, largely because of weather.

The first official Thanksgiving festivities were built on what was known of that much-earlier harvest celebration involving Wampanoag First Nations and Pilgrim settlers in 1621. While thanksgiving harvests were already long celebrated by North America's Indigenous Peoples their particular meal may or may not have included wild turkey.

Of course, turkey isn't all the same. When you want to bring some Thanksgiving spirit to your home in, say, Uganda, and order a turkey, you might see it being walked on a leash to your front door. "Uh, Babe, you might want to come and see this."

Grace, or Gracie as people call her, is quite good off-leash. She's a Sheepadoodle, a 37-pound bundle of fur and mystery. She loves watching parades, along with squirrels, dogs, people and the world at large, especially from her front-window perch at our Canadian home.

She wears her name naturally and brings a certain tone, an expectation, to our family's space. As it says on her doghouse, "Be the person your dog thinks you are."

This is the thing about us and animals, dogs more than turkeys, Grace an especially telling example. The spirit in animals, called "nephesh" in ancient Hebrew texts, is the same breath of life given to you and me. It connects us and animals in an elemental way.

Sure we have differences. Grace can't learn, say, aerospace engineering. But she has feelings and emotions and is mysteriously close with people. "She's beautiful," they say. So when it comes to us and the animals and sentient awareness, it seems more a question of degree than kind.

This is why even though the animal world (like the human world) can be red with tooth and claw, some animals seem more grace filled than some people.

When Grace looks at me intensely, sometimes it seems like she wants to jump out of her confined dog-self, grab me by the collar and explain how she understands more than I imagine. Some day, in another time and place, we'll all be grateful to know more about it.

Now it's Thanksgiving, a holiday that can be a societal corrective as much as anything. Not long ago we couldn't even meet. Not with closeness or freedom, anyway. Since the pandemic the world has changed. More so, our perspective has changed. Because hard times can often bring an especially thankful spirit. And grace.

So take time when naming your dog. And give thanks for, as Uganda's children like to say, "the gift of life." I recently learned of a family from church that was shaken by death. It was their mom. Her husband found her dead on the couch one morning from a heart attack. She was my age.

This is it. Life itself is grace. The sun rising every morning is grace. Even as the darkness of sweet sleep falls into dreams and places we can't even remember — that is grace. Dawn to dusk to dawn, it's all grace.

In a time when words are becoming increasingly meaningless, here's one that over the centuries has kept its shine. This weekend I'm thankful for Grace the dog who reminds me of it by simply being herself.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM AND THOMASFROESE.SUBSTACK.COM.



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

Grace the Sheepadoodle, described by Thomas Froese as "a 37-pound bundle of fur and mystery," enjoys a parade. Writing about Thanksgiving and animals, Froese notes caring for Grace reminds him to appreciate the grace in our world.



GUSTAVO RYMBERG PHOTO

Hundreds of people took part in a walk on Monday in Hamilton to honour the victims of the Oct. 7 attack in Israel. It was a day marked by strength, unity and a sense of solidarity, Gustavo Rymberg writes.

A powerful display of unity at commemoration walk

GUSTAVO RYMBERG

On Oct. 7, our community stood together in a way that words can hardly capture.

More than 800 people joined us for the commemoration walk, a gathering that surpassed our hopes and filled our hearts with pride. It was a day marked by strength, unity, and a sense of solidarity that reached far beyond the Jewish community.

We were deeply moved to see not only our own community members but also friends and allies standing alongside us. Members of the Polish community, the Ukrainian community, city councillors, police officers, and Christian friends were all there, walking with us, making us feel truly supported and protected by their love. In these challenging times, we are reminded that we are not alone in our fight against antisemitism; we are joined by others who share our vision of a more just and compassionate world.

One of the most powerful aspects of the walk was its peaceful and respectful nature. There were no shouts, no manifestations of hate

and no violence — just a quiet strength and a shared determination to honour the memory of the victims of the Oct. 7 terrorist attack.

We walked together with dignity, showing the world our response to darkness is one of light, that our answer to hate is love and that our community stands united in a spirit of respect and compassion.

Personally, this is a day I will never forget. To witness our community come together — visible, powerful, and united — was a message that resonates now more than ever. Seeing young families with their children, university students, seniors and everyone in between, all present to remember the victims of the massacre of Oct. 7, was a profound moment that reminded us of the strength we find in each other.

Though we still face challenges, and though we cannot ignore the disappointment we feel over the persistent issues that remain unaddressed, the walk was a symbol of hope. It showed that despite the hardships we have faced this past year, we are capable of rising above them — united in our grief, in our hope, and in our resolve.

That's why it was somewhat disappointing not to see any reviews or pictures of this event in the Hamilton Spectator. This was a significant and meaningful moment for the Jewish community that deserved to be shared with the wider public.

It's important for people to see that our community is not built on hate. Instead, it is rooted in love, compassion, and the tireless pursuit of justice. We hoped that the local media would join us in shining a light on this peaceful, united front that defied stereotypes and sent a message of hope.

Thank you to everyone who participated, to those who marched with us, and to those who continue to stand with us in spirit. Last Monday, we proved that the bonds of our community are unbreakable and that our determination to fight against hatred is stronger than ever. What an honour it is to lead this community, to bring our allies together in support of our Jewish family.

GUSTAVO RYMBERG IS THE CEO OF THE HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION.

LETTERS

Mac should be billed for parties

Re: Homecoming chaos dampened by sanctioned McMaster events, but street parties persist, Oct. 9

Part of the solution to solve the issues relating to off-campus, nonsanctioned homecoming parties was to put in place new bylaws that would result in large financial penalties.

Did it work?

This year at Western University, they had 15,000 students off campus in the neighbourhood. That was up from last year when the estimate was 10,000. The result was 39 people sent to hospital and a host of charges, including 24 Liquor Licence Act offences, 187 monetary penalties and one criminal assault charge against a police officer.

At McMaster, they report 6,000 to 7,000 students going off campus to parties. This was down from 8,000 in 2023 but more than the previous two years. The impact: 13 people to hospital; three charged with a nuisance bylaw; two arrests; and only three monetary tickets issued.

The cost to our taxpayers to police this event and the damage to local property owners lays clearly at the feet of the university. And to a lesser extent our politicians, who put in place bylaws that on the surface of things had absolutely no impact.

A bill should be sent to the university for "our costs." A complete review of ineffective steps to solve this problem should be carried out. Our west-end citizens deserve better.

Glenn Gibson, Hamilton

American politics matters in Canada

Re: Change Trump coverage focus, Oct. 9

The letter writer who complains

of negative coverage of Donald Trump on the grounds that U.S. politics are irrelevant in Canada is overlooking a serious concern.

True, we can't affect the outcome of their election, but as it threatens to end democracy in yet another republic, we can take pains to avoid following suit.

If Trump is elected, it is unlikely he will serve out his term, possibly ousted by JD Vance and the cabinet under the provisions of the 25th Amendment. This would be exactly what the supporters of Vance's nomination had in mind. A radical proponent of Project 2025 who has criticized mainstream America's "dictator-phobia," he would move to eradicate the so-called "deep state," i.e. the elites in government, give the oligarchs free rein, install himself as dictator and end free elections.

What does any of that have to do with Canada? Fascism creep across the border.

We need to pay attention and fortify our institutions — independent universities, courts, the rule of law and an electoral system that doesn't bow to manipulation and corruption.

There are serious threats afoot south of our border and we shouldn't sleepwalk through this.

Jeanette Pieczonka, Burlington

A nightmare is unfolding in the U.S.

Re: Trump's calculated assault on democracy, Oct. 9

As an avid observer of the current campaign nightmare in the U.S., I heartily endorse the opinions and serious concerns expressed in Henry Giroux's piece.

As he points out, the outcome of the current presidential and "down ballot" elections should be of great concern to all citizens of the U.S. and Canada, given the promises and threats being made by Donald Trump and his running mate, and the apparent

support and purposeful collusion of their hard-core GOP elected members and the dreaded "base."

It would be a great service to all of the unfortunate potential victims of Trump's abominable rhetoric if Giroux's thoughtful and well-written opinion piece could be seen by all of our southern neighbour's voters before Nov. 5.

Bill Millar, Stoney Creek

A little gratitude goes a long way

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. Happy Thanksgiving one and all.

Ross Prince, Hamilton

Police memorial was wonderful

Just a huge thank you to the Hamilton Police Service for the police memorial that we attended Tuesday at Christ's Cathedral in Hamilton.

It was a wonderful closure for our small family to be able to attend, in honour of our dad/husband Staff Sgt. Charles Evans, who passed in January 2023.

From the honour guard, the choir and the mounted unit, to the chief and deputies and reverend, it was a comforting closure. Thank you so much.

My dad loved his job and loved being a police officer in Hamilton, all those years ago. He would have been so proud of the entire service. Much appreciated!

Sandy Evans Mechefske, Riverview, N.B., on behalf of the Evans family