



The year was 1961, and I was serving in the Navy at San Diego, Calif. I was very homesick and wanted to be home for Thanksgiving. Four days before Thanksgiving, I applied for leave, not expecting to get it. That afternoon, the Boatswains Mate told me it had been approved and I could leave anytime. "Wow," was I happy! There was only one problem, and it was a big one. I had only 37 dollars to my name. After pondering the situation for a while ("two minutes"), I decided I would do what I had done twice before, hitchhike home. About 40 miles from Phoenix, I was standing at a crossroad. By the way, Phoenix back then was nothing like it is now. It was very desolate that far out. A 1947 Plymouth stopped and the driver waved for me to get in. "Where you going, sailor?" he said. "To Ohio," I replied, "Are you going that far?" The man laughed and said, "Not hardly. I'm only going about 30 miles, but I figured that would help a little." I assured him it would. The fellow was about 30 and looked to be quite poor. He told me he had been somewhere looking for work and that his family had been on hard times for some time. I asked him if he was looking forward to Thanksgiving and he said sadly, "Not really." He changed the subject and began to talk about me and the Navy. We soon reached his turnoff. I was about to get out when he said, "You sure look tired. Why don't you go to my house for coffee and rest about an hour?" "Well, I'm really in a hurry," I answered. "It's only a quarter of a mile, come on." "Okay, let's go," I said. We pulled up to his house, and I could see just how

poor they were. Once inside, I met a lady that I will never forget. She, too, was about 30. She had a child on her hip, one on her hand, and one crawling. She was plainly dressed. Her eyes were tired, but sparkled as she smiled and greeted me. She and the children, as well as the house, were very clean. The floors were bare. The furniture was worn out, and the walls had not been painted in years. As I sat and talked to John and Helen, I noticed no evidence of toys for the children. They never complained about their situation. In fact, Helen was so attentive to the children and to our conversation.

She asked me about the places I had been. Every time I told her of a different place, her eyes would enlarge, and she would get so excited. They never asked me to stay for lunch. To this day, I have always believed they never had anything to offer me. John and Helen were tired from their struggles, but possessed a spirit of victory that saturated my heart and soul. Over the years, when I have passed through hard times, I have always reflected upon that couple and their character. I insisted on John taking me only to the main road, as I knew he didn't have much gas. In less than fifteen minutes, I was picked up and dropped off in town.

I was across the street from a small restaurant named "Good Hope." I went in, sat at the counter and read the menu. The dinners looked good, but I decided upon a hamburger, as I was now short of funds. I had folded \$30.00 and left it under my coffee cup at John and Helen's. The restaurant was not too crowded, and the man that waited on me began to talk to me. He asked where I was going and so forth. I soon learned he owned the restaurant. I asked why he called it "Good Hope." He told me how he and his wife and four children left Michigan and came here looking for a new start. They found this restaurant closed, and with every cent they had, they rented it. "We named it "Good Hope" because we hoped for nothing but good to come from our new life in Arizona," he said. "That's what that couple back the road needs," I said, "good hope." "What couple?" he asked. I told him about the

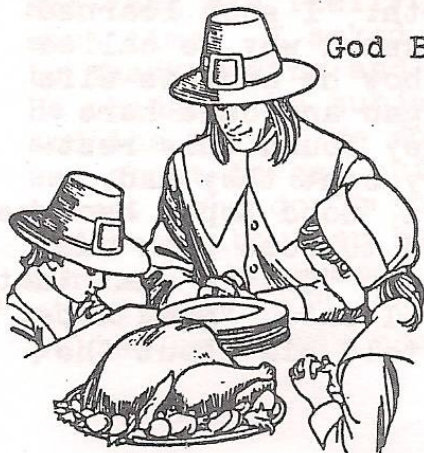
couple. By this time, the restaurant was half full. Without warning, Ed, the owner, yelled, "Hey, everybody, listen up. This sailor has something to tell you all!" I could have fell off the stool from the shock of his abrupt announcement. (It was my first public speaking experience.) Once again, I told the situation. Soon everybody was talking. It wasn't long before they were organized and promising to be back at the diner at 5 P.M. Ed insisted I stay. I'm sure glad I did.

At 5 o'clock there was so much activity at that diner, the police stopped to see what was wrong. Soon, they joined in the spirit. By 6 o'clock, there was atleast a twenty-car caravan with a police escort heading for the couple's house. As for me, where did I ride? Why, in the police car, where else. Big Ed insisted I ride in the front seat.

You wouldn't believe what those people gave. Toys, food, food, food, furniture, and money. Most importantly, a job at a local feed company for John. What a Thanksgiving they had! Isn't that what it's all about anyhow? "GOOD HOPE"

The story doesn't end there. In the crowd was a retired Brig. General. He called the Air Force base there at Phoenix and got me a ride on a plane heading East. Where was the plane going? Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio.

That was my most memorable Thanksgiving. A Thanksgiving of "Good Hope." In case you're wondering whatever happened to the sailor, well, he rose to a place of stature and prominence as the President of the Great Ohio Bottle Club.



God Bless You This Thanksgiving,

Gary Beatty, President
O.B.C.

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