

Moultrie News

News

Reflecting on Thanksgiving, from Pilgrim days to modern times

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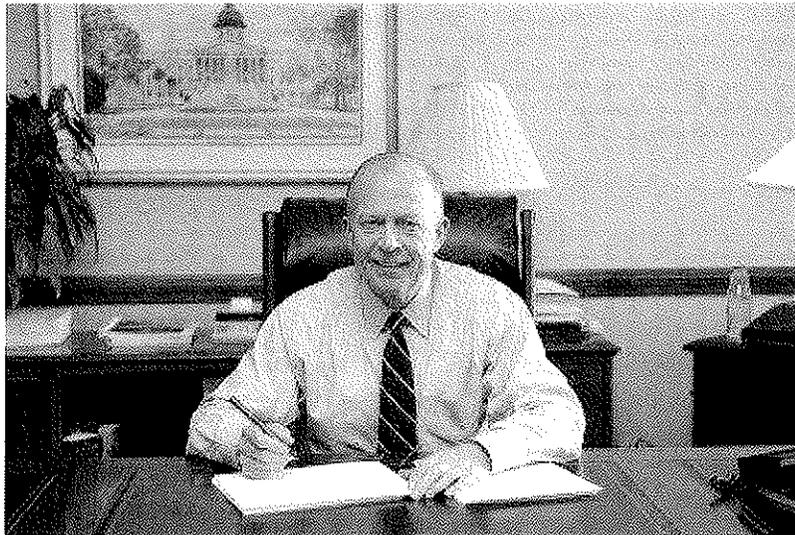


Photo Provided Richard Eckstrom

Although our nation and world are vastly different from when the Pilgrims observed the first Thanksgiving in 1621, some things about Thanksgiving have endured throughout the years.

Thanksgiving still ushers in the Christmas season, undeniably the most meaningful time of year for many of us. Families still gather to fellowship and savor a bountiful meal. And Americans still reflect on the things they're thankful for, in their own lives and in being a part of our exceptional nation.

Just think about the number of truly great things we all can be thankful for this Thanksgiving season.

I think about our men and women in uniform, away from their families helping to defend our nation, especially those serving overseas. Let's be sure to honor their sacrifices, express our gratitude, and salute their service this Thanksgiving season.

I think about my elected position as comptroller general of South Carolina and about what a privilege it is to serve the citizens of our state. I realize that elected officials as a whole have sunk to new lows in public esteem these days – and justifiably so to some extent – but, thankfully, many serve for admirable reasons.

I think about the many opportunities this country extended to my hardworking grandparents who immigrated from Sweden; about the many opportunities this country extended to my parents; about the many opportunities it extended to me, my five brothers and two sisters; and about the many opportunities it has extended to my three children.

I think about how much better off the citizens of our country are compared to the citizens of any other country on earth. Immigrants from countries around the world still flood to our shores to enjoy the good life that our country offers to those who seek to become Americans willing to work hard to support their families and benefit their communities.

There's something else that comes to my mind at Thanksgiving as well.

I think about what life was like for those pilgrim settlers and for the early colonists who followed them: the fierce struggles they must have faced just to survive; their hard work and endurance; their love of liberty and individual freedom that was so intense that they risked everything to build their futures free of the heavy hand of tyrannical government.

I'm grateful for their pioneering spirits, amazing efforts and dreams of freedom. Because of their longing to breathe free, you and I live in the nation they gave us, the greatest and most special nation in history.

Of course, the world and America are very different places today than in their day.

In some ways, the world is a far more advanced place. But it's also far more dangerous, plagued by threats like terrorism and cyber warfare.

Here at home, we've also made great advances. Think about the improvements we've made in racial and cultural relations, and surely in the comfort level of our day-to-day lives.

But as we've evolved, so has the role of government in our daily lives. Now, I don't want to get political about this, but it's just another important point to ponder while thinking about Thanksgiving then versus Thanksgiving now.

I realize that life in America is a lot more complex nowadays. But, surely the Pilgrims would scratch their heads in bewilderment at the far reaches made by government into our everyday lives – from such basics as the large number of local ordinances on noise or lighting or building styles, to much larger intrusions like the national security surveillance program and all the taxes that dig ever deeper into our pockets to feed the growing appetite of government and government programs, many of which we don't want nor do we need.

I don't think this has happened because government is necessarily "evil." I think it's mainly because government tends to grow just like other entities tend to grow.

Because of that tendency, it requires constant effort to prevent government from growing and encroaching on us too much. That's sort of what the Boston Tea Party was about. That's what the Pilgrims were about, too. I'm extremely thankful for that priceless heritage they imparted to us.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours. Christmas is almost here.

Richard Eckstrom, a CPA, is the comptroller general of South Carolina and commander of the S.C. State Guard.