

Opinion

Mark gives advice on dealing with relatives

by Mark Owens

This week we celebrate our nation's most important forgotten holiday: Thanksgiving. I say forgotten because it seems in recent years many of us have jumped from Halloween to Christmas, skipping over Turkey Day entirely. Television networks don't even show "It's a Charlie Brown Thanksgiving" anymore. No wonder our country is going to hell in a handbasket.

Anyway, many of you are going home for the holiday. Eventually you're going to have to eat Thanksgiving Dinner. Not that this is bad. Far from it. For many of you, it's the first meal in a long time that doesn't involve a) points, b) a respirator, c) toxic waste warnings, or d) all of the above.

The problem with Thanksgiving Dinner is relatives. These are people that you don't see for several months between family gatherings. These are people so strange you really start to wonder if you've been adopted.

Right now I'd like to open the floor up to questions you might have about how to handle your relations, even though everyone knows I've made them up. At least I know the right answers.

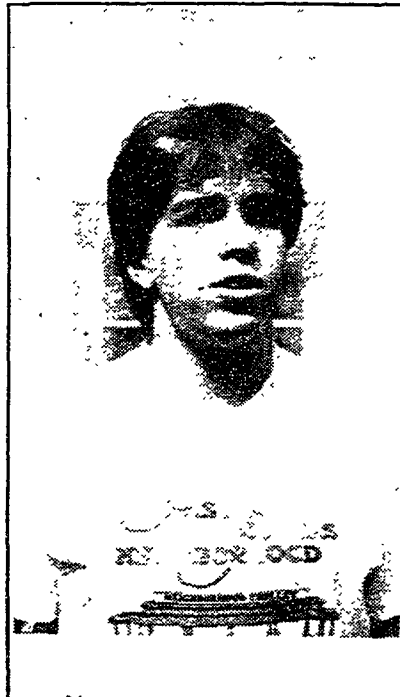
Q: How can I avoid all of my aunts, nieces, and grandmothers asking me the same questions about school, work, and social life approximately every ten minutes without jumping on the kitchen counter with an automatic weapon and taking them all out?

A: The obvious answer is to wait until dinner starts. Right after grace, climb on the table and, planting your left foot in the cranberry sauce and your right foot in the turkey, give your answers all at once in a loud obnoxious voice. I don't think they'll ever ask you anything again, let alone have you over for dinner. If questions persist, I highly recommend the AK-47 with a banana clip.

Q: What do I do about small child relatives?

A: You could either a) find a nice sized closet or b) play nifty children's games like "Find the Dust Bunny in the Basement," "Astronaut Testing in the Dryer (use high spin cycle)," or "Small Children Play Hansel and Gretel in Detroit (remember: this version doesn't use bread crumbs.)"

Q: I have this problem



with the older men in my family. They engage in male bonding activities after dinner, like sprawling on the sofa watching football until they fall asleep, or, Heaven forbid, going outside to stand around various cars talking about automotive things. What do I do?

A: There's not much you can

The Missing Pieces

do. Just follow them around and nod when everyone else nods. If someone asks you a question, use one of the following answers:

- 1) yep, them damn Republicans
- 2) yep, them damn Democrats
- 3) it's a 350 with an overhead dual quadraphonic cam
- 4) bad call
- 5) "140, 141, whatever it takes"

Another strange phenomenon that occurs when you go home for the holidays is that everyone in your family turns into a Guilt Monster.

Think about it; when you go home you want to spend time with friends you haven't seen for a long time. Here is the typical response from your folks (especially mom) as you're putting on your jacket:

"Are you going out?"

Well, yeah. Some of the guys and I are going out for some pizza and a little bowling.

"Oh. So you'd rather go out with your friends than spend time with your family, whom you haven't seen in two months."

Well...

"I mean, it's not as if we never talk about anything or

know what's going on with the family, right?"

Ah... (sound of car horn) I got to go. See you later.

What's worse is the conversation between you and your girlfriend/boyfriend:

"Oh! You'd rather go out drinking with your friends than spend time with me huh! Huh!" (makes noise that's something similar to what the little girl does in "the Exorcist")

To avoid this problem, stay home most of the time and annoy everyone until they beg you to go out with your friends, or to Detroit. Whichever gets you out of the house longer.

That's it. If you follow these little tips I guarantee you'll come home from Thanksgiving Break without a turkey drumstick shoved up your left nostril. By the way: my mailbox buddy if you're out there, stop by the mailbox from time to time and pick up your mail. I hope you don't mind that I used one of the order forms out of your Frederick's of Hollywood catalogue. That camouflage mosquito-netting negligee is going to make a great Christmas gift.

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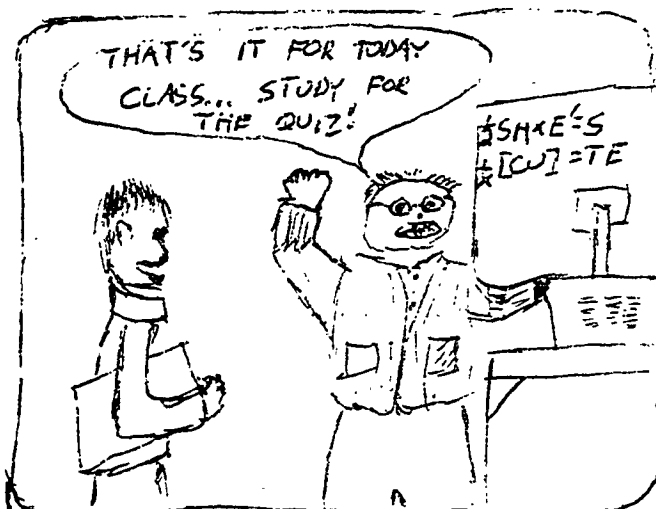
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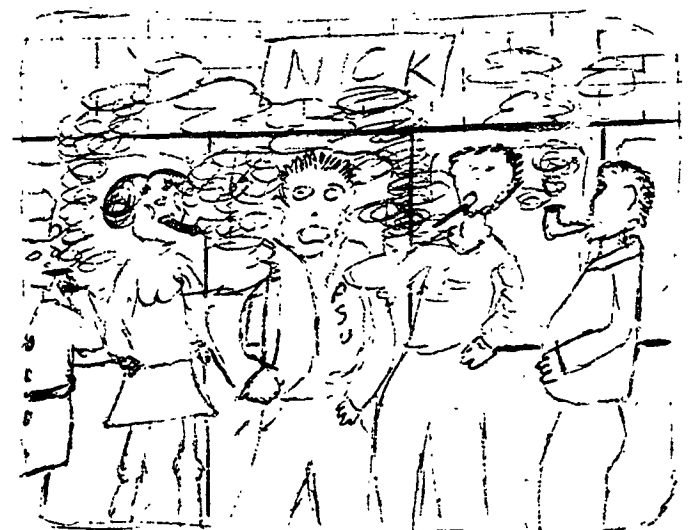
by GREG FARRELL



Finally, I'm out of this stuffy classroom and bound for some fresh air!



Just three more steps and I can enjoy the...



wheeze... cough... gasp... great outdoors.