

Give Thanks

✘ My husband and I are heading out to Denver to spend Thanksgiving with my family. Thinking about the holiday and what I'm really grateful for is the love of my husband, my family, and my friends. I wrote this article a couple of years ago but, with some changes, it continues to express my feelings perfectly.

I have lots to be thankful for and consider myself a very lucky lady. Like everyone, I've had my ups and downs, sickness and health, failures and successes. I believe there is a reason for suffering that isn't always apparent to us.

I live on an island in the Pacific Northwest. Right now, most of the trees have lost their leaves but there are plenty of evergreens that continue to tower around us. When the air is fresh and cool, I think a blind person need only take in a deep breath to "see" the color green.

Precious to me is the blessing of having been born in America – a country whose Founding Fathers recognized that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights and incorporated those rights into our Constitution – the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But, I would not have been so fortunate had my father not emigrated from Buchen, Germany. My father was the youngest of several siblings in a family of farmers. Because it was difficult for my grandparents to feed their entire family, it was decided it would be best for my father to go to America. So, in 1924, according to the family history, my grandfather sold a pig for \$50 and sent my father off to America. He left Hamburg on the Deutschland, and arrived at Ellis Island on September 7, 1924. Had he not left Germany, he'd never have met my mother in Brooklyn, NY, and I would never have been born.

It would not be for many years after his death in 1972 that I would truly recognize the invaluable gift he gave me. One of the few regrets I have is my failure to let him know just that.

I've traveled on five continents, and, while it's always fascinating to visit other countries, there isn't another place on earth I would rather live than in the United States.

When I hear people complain about how bad things are in America, I often think of my experiences in Dakar, Senegal. I can still see the enclosed market which housed rows and rows of fish, with no refrigeration other than ice, which produced an almost unbearable stench as I carefully walked on the slimy floors, nearly tripping over the dozens of cats roaming through the aisles. It was very different from the comfort and convenience of shopping at my local Safeway or Walmart.

No where in Dakar had I seen rows and rows of air fresheners or the myriad of deodorants, toothpastes, candies, bottled waters, or the variety of cereals we take for granted here at home. I saw one store on a main shopping avenue with an enormous table which had probably a hundred shoes to be picked through to find a matching pair in the correct size. It was a far cry from stores like Foot Locker which has dozens of athletic shoes neatly displayed in every size and color imaginable.

While riding on the bus, the streets were in such disrepair that the sidewalks were cracked wide open as if an earthquake had just hit the city. Buildings were gutted and rebar was removed to be used in other buildings. Some stores were actually old cargo containers sitting upright.

Another memorable sight was the dozens and dozens of goats in the streets preparing to be bought and slaughtered for the celebration of Tabaski.

Alongside those goats, I saw a young man literally crawling on

a dirt sidewalk begging for money. I didn't want to stare at this pitiful human being, but I'm convinced that his limbs were so deformed that he moved insect-like along the sidewalk. So, when I see "homeless" people in Seattle leaving St. Francis House with loaves of bread and then throwing the slices on the street to feed pigeons it makes my head spin.

It may be part of the universal human condition, but too many people would rather complain about what they don't have instead of appreciating what they do have.

It's also why I have no patience for people like the Occupy people from a couple of years ago who wouldn't have been tolerated in places like China and Iran. Instead of doing something productive like working within our system, choosing candidates that reflect their thinking (although I doubt they had a cohesive thought about anything), and helping to get them elected, they chose, instead, to "occupy" cities, disrupt the lives of hardworking Americans, cause havoc, commit crimes, and eventually cost the taxpayers millions of dollars.

I remember one of my husband's clients, a woman from Vietnam, telling him that "you live in Heaven and don't even know it. In Vietnam, where there is no government help, if you have no food, you starve; if you have no clothes, that's too bad; if you don't have a home, you live on street." So, I have no sympathy for those people who think the government (aka the US taxpayer) owes them free birth control.

I also have no tolerance for the criminals who are going around sucker punching out strangers in the so-called "knockout game" and posting their horrific acts on the internet. If I were Empress of the World, I'd round them all up, make sure they're all in prison, and throw away the keys. It's not a game when you seriously hurt or kill someone. And please don't expect me to show pity on them because they're "disenfranchised black youth."

To quote author Ken Hamblin, I say to all these malcontents and miscreants, "pick a better country."

If I hadn't traveled and experienced life in other countries, I might not appreciate how fortunate we are here in America. Sadly, too many people don't get to see how the rest of the world lives. I'd suggest they go and live in Dakar for six months and come back and tell us how horrible life is here in the U.S.

So, while we celebrate Thanksgiving, I give thanks to God for all things, the "bestest husband in the entire universe," and for my wonderful family and friends. And I am forever grateful to my father for the sacrifices he made for me. "Thanks, Daddy."