

One day our cousin Orin was flying on his way to Sioux Falls in a B17. He created quite a ruckus when he circled the farm in salute. The turkeys scattered in a panic. They ran into fences, sometimes breaking their necks. Little did the turkeys know that later they might be dinners for those airmen in England.

Soon after World War II broke out, red meat was rationed. The demand for turkeys led us to raise thousands as a contribution to the war effort. That way, servicemen all over the world would have turkey for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. Turkey raising became a big business for area farmers. We were glad to play a patriotic part, bringing a bit of cheer to the servicemen. Most of our turkeys went to the Christmas market. They had to be ready about three weeks before the holidays. Our brother John remembers loading those turkeys into crates as a young boy; in his words, “a flopping chore.” With their wing span they seemed bigger than he was, and they squawked loudly in protest at being stuffed into the wire crates.

A sense of wonder wells up within me as I remember that from the Pilgrims to the present-day, the turkey has symbolized Thanksgiving. It’s a day to honor those who founded and those who fought to preserve the values of our country.

Cheers and waves followed the trucks as they took those turkeys to the next stage of becoming dinners. Our part in the war effort was complete. We thought of all the servicemen that would remember their loved ones while enjoying the turkey and trimmings of the holiday meal, and we wished them well.

OUR SPRING

Let’s mosey over to the spring,
To gather sprigs of watercress
On this warm sunny morn.

Wade into the cool spring water,
Bare feet splash in squishy mud.
Feel it ooze between the toes.

Water bugs do skim the surface,
Tadpoles swiftly scurry by
As they dart for safe dark shelter.

Bullfrog waiting for an insect
Sprawls upon a nearby log,
Patient, hungry, bug-eyed frog.

Green and lacy watercress
Bids us pluck a fresh bouquet.
Treat for Mother’s sandwiches.