

## James L. Holly, M.D.

Home To Thanksgiving  
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A year ago, my family went through the annual ritual of asking me what I wanted for Christmas. As it was with my father, they had the problem of what do you buy a person who needs and wants nothing. After having told my wife that there was nothing I wanted, I called her one day and said, "I found something that I want!" Her response was, "Buy it." I told her that it was not inexpensive and she repeated, "Buy it."

It now hangs in our home and it is pictured below. It is a Currier and Ives print from 1868. Many of you will know Currier and Ives; beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this company made beautiful pictures of American scenes. Originally, the prints cost a few dollars but grew in value as they were lost in fires and neglect. They were also hand colored.

The one that I wanted is entitled, "Home To Thanksgiving." Thanksgiving is my favorite day of the year but if I had named this lithograph, I would have named it "Home for Thanksgiving," not "to." Here it is; isn't it beautiful?



Hardly a day goes by that I don't stop at this picture which hangs in my home and look at it

carefully. This past week (November 13, 2014) my wife and I sat in a restaurant in Washington, D.C., and I said out of the blue, "I really love that picture," As I set it, my mind took a leap and I spontaneously started weeping. Not uncontrollability but surprisingly. As I collected myself, I said, "It just occurred to me that I can never go 'Home to Thanksgiving' again, as my Mother passed away last month.

Thanksgiving is such a wonder time. It is the time that families and friends gather. For me, it meant "going to Grandmother's house." Have you ever wondered why we never went to "Grandfather's house?" It was always "Grandmother's". The smells and noises of Thanksgiving were joyous. My Mother's parents passed away when I was very young, so my memories are of my Father's parents. They lived in a mansion; well, it was a mansion in my eyes. They had a living room but I don't remember ever sitting in it. We always gathered on the back screen porch. Even in cold weather, we gathered in the kitchen. The house is occupied now by one of their great, grandchildren and when I go to visit my father's and now my mother's graves, I also drive by that house and another house they lived in. Someday, I hope to write a book about the houses which my family turned into homes.

But what does Thanksgiving and my memories about it have to do with heath? Without doubt the most powerful and the most positive emotion any person has is gratitude which results in thanksgiving. Thanksgiving and gratitude exclude negative feelings like envy, greed, bitterness and lust. A heart filled with gratitude and a life filled with thanksgiving will be a healthy heart and a healthy life. Sadly, gratitude and thanksgiving are also the rarest of emotions.

When my children were young, we all learned a great lesson about gifting, gratitude and thanksgiving. We had one of the earliest and best computers. It was an Apple 2e with two floppy disc drives. We used it extensively. For a year, my children and I had a thirty-minute radio broadcast and every Thursday I prepared a transcript for our broadcast that week. We still have the recordings of those programs and they are treasures.

With the passing of time, we did not use the computer as much. One day a minister friend casually said to me that his wife had a hand-held computing device on which she would put her grocery list, but he lamented, it would not hold much. As I left him that day, I thought we might give him our computer. When I suggested that to my family, my children asked what we would do for a computer. They knew that we couldn't afford to buy another one and I said, "Well, we'll just have to trust the Lord."

We gave the computer away and we did without one. Several months later, I was in the minister's home in Kirbyville, Texas. I saw the computer which we had given him but it was different. A broken key was repaired and the computer looked almost new. I marveled as I realized that the way to take something old and to make it new was to give it away. The transformation of the computer was a product of gratitude and of thanksgiving.

Several weeks later, I was visiting the office of a physician friend. He was showing me his new computer system which was state of the art. I had an old computer at my office which wouldn't do much and I now did not have a computer at home. My physician friend began to

really rag on me about how much better his computer was than the one I had. He kept at it. Fortunately, I was genuinely proud for him and only thought seriously about his hassling me after the fact. At one point, my friend turned to the computer consultant and said, "There is something missing. Let's go to my car and find it." We all walked out to his car and he opened the trunk. At that point, he said, "What is this? You bought another system just like mine. And, why is Dr. Holly's name on it?" He smiled as he turned to me and even today almost thirty years later, I remember the tears that flowed down my face as I realized that he was giving my family a computer system much finer than the one we had given away. I think that Dr. William High will not mind my telling this story about his gift.

Of course, I have bought hundreds of computers since then, and SETMA has probably bought thousands of computers; but, I shall never ever be so thankful as I still am for that first computer gift. As this article will be published on Thanksgiving Day, I trust that your thanksgiving activity will bring you joy and peace and above all it will bring you a healthy spirit which "in all things give thanks," as that is a commandment with a promise. Happy Thanksgiving to each of you and to all of us.