

A PATH FORWARD

GRANDPA FRANK, COUSIN FRANNY AND DRAMA-FREE THANKSGIVING

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Let's cut to the chase: Thanksgiving dread has become a national condition. In the lead up to the holiday, we begin the exercise of steeling our nerves. Remembrances of past Thanksgivings seep into our daily thoughts, along with wonder: Will this year be any better than last year? Or the year before? A writer in *Scientific American* offers this unfortunate description: "The new Civil War isn't being fought out in the fields, but around the dinner table." Did she get it right?

You imagine the scene: a gathering of family and friends that begins pleasantly enough, with an air of cordiality — even joy — as greetings are exchanged. After embracing Grandpa Frank, you immediately start wondering how long it will be before he insults Cousin Franny and her liberal views. You know she has a knot in her stomach, anticipating the inevitable — unless of course, she can gain the upper hand with a pre-emptory lecture about the ravages of climate change. You begin doubting whether you can once again follow your mother's lifelong guidance and hold your tongue.

Shortly after the 2016 presidential election, I wrote a column



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about managing Thanksgiving dinner. It has since been reported that one-sixth of Americans stopped talking to a family member or friend as a result of the election. Three years later, polarization has only deepened. Some relationships may never recover.

The column included a seven-step process to achieve tableside decorum. I am reprising it here with a few changes, so your holiday can be rift- (and indigestion-) free. Here's how it works:

Step 1: Discard the con-

tentious notion of "right vs. wrong." Your opinions and emotions are valid; so are Grandpa Frank's and Cousin Franny's. Let go of your ego and try to be thoughtful. There is no single truth.

Step 2: You don't have to hold your tongue, really, but do take time to think before you speak. Don't let anger cloud your mind and degrade the way you express your ideas. Katie Krimer, a licensed social worker and psychotherapist in New York City says,

"We must hold ourselves accountable for civility and lowering emotional intensity even in the face of open hostility."

If you do find yourself drawn into an argument, or sense intense anger coming on, step away from the table. Find a quiet place where you can breathe deeply and quiet your mind.

Step 3: Listen with a goal of hearing and understanding what the other person is saying. That's very different from pretending to listen while you are actually thinking about and rehearsing your next response. You may be surprised to learn that the person across the table has something beneficial to say.

Step 4: Try to determine how your tablemates came to their viewpoints. Be curious and ask open-ended questions such as, "What leads you to think that?" Conflict occurs when underlying needs are not met or even recognized. In answering questions, these needs can be revealed.

Step 5: Respond respectfully by restating ideas accurately to demonstrate that you heard and understand (even if you do not agree). This can be the most critical point in any conflict resolution process. Kister says, "A wall will remain a wall until (a person chooses) to soften or open their

mind. We cannot change someone with sheer force of will or a screaming match." When an argument is repeated over and over, it means that a person feels they have not yet been heard.

Step 6: Show humility by acknowledging that everyone makes mistakes in action and judgment, including your side. No person is perfect. This acknowledgment will lead to a collective sigh of relief, building empathy and paving the way for all to come together.

Step 7: Celebrate a shared value and revisit a favorite memory. You may not agree with your relatives about the impeachment inquiry. But you, Grandpa Frank, Cousin Franny and the others likely love your country in equal measure.

So instead of feeling dread, let's gather this Thanksgiving with the idea that the exchange of diverse viewpoints is a fundamental American right, vital to our precious democracy.

Steven P. Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC), a San Diego-based organization that is working to create innovative solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. NCRC is nationally recognized for its conflict management and communication strategies. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit www.ncrconline.com.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

CAREGIVING: LAUREN MAPP

Epilepsy Foundation gala is Dec. 3

Imagine a village of gingerbread houses, roofs heavy with frosting and peppermint candies hard at work everywhere. Maybe a cracked wall here and there, but nothing a little powdered sugar can't hide.

The Epilepsy Foundation of San Diego invites you to visit such a place for yourself at its fundraiser Dec. 3.

The 26th annual Gingerbread City Gala at the Hyatt Regency in La Jolla will raise money to support the Epilepsy Foundation's free programs for people living with epilepsy and their families. Last year's event raised \$150,000 for the Epilepsy Foundation, said Ann Condon, the foundation's event manager.

"It's a pivotal fundraiser for us and it's a great way to kickstart the holiday season," she said. "And there's also lots of fun and delicious food."

Sandra Coufal The event will be hosted by Padres pitcher Kirby Yates and his wife Ashlee, who was diagnosed with epilepsy in 2018 after giving birth to their second child. The pair have since become supporters

of the Epilepsy Foundation of San Diego, Condon said. And in September, the Padres hosted an epilepsy awareness night where a portion of ticket sales were donated to the nonprofit.

Tickets for the Dec. 3 gala start at \$500 per guest and can be purchased online at www.epilepsysandiego.org or by calling (619) 296-0161. People can also volunteer to help out with fundraiser or lend a hand at the Gingerbread Kids event on Dec. 15 at the Lafayette Hotel.

Gingerbread Kids is a free event, which includes lunch, geared toward children with epilepsy and their families. Children and teenagers will decorate their own gingerbread houses while their parents attend an educational workshop.

The Epilepsy Foundation supports county residents diagnosed with epilepsy and their families through support groups, art therapy, children and family camps, seizure first aid training and counseling.

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THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

News services report on D.C. stories

The Readers' Rep took a call and an email last week from subscribers who commented on the writers of Thursday's impeachment hearing story. They believed the writers were Union-Tribune staffers.

The U-T uses news services for coverage of Washington, D.C., proceedings. The source of coverage appears at the end of each story. New York Times reporters wrote Thursday's article. Other news services U-T editors use for Washington coverage are The Washington Post, The Associated Press and stories from the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times, the U-T's sister paper. U-T reporters cover news that occurs in the San Diego region or has a strong local connection.

However, headlines for all print-edition stories, in all sections of the paper, are written by U-T editors at the paper's downtown San Diego office. Also, U-T editors are responsible for all content that appears in the paper and have free rein to edit news service stories.

It's time, not 'bias'

The Readers' Rep and sports editor Jay

Posner recently received two emails about the sports section not having coverage of two games. One was about a baseball play-off game between the Yankees and Astros, and another was on a basketball game between the Lakers and Clippers.

Both readers wondered if the reason was "bias."

The sports section has a deadline of around 9:50 p.m. most nights. When games end late, the sports crew is unable to publish scores, or in some cases, coverage at all. Both these games ended past the deadline.

The editors, however, have until 10:55 p.m. to chase down pages to publish late scores. But it's random as to which homes will receive the early pages and which ones will get the later, updated ones.

The reason for the lack of coverage in print for those two games was time. The sports staff wants to report on games. Staffers would never withhold coverage because of some perceived "bias" against a team.

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FOR THEIR BENEFIT

SATURDAY Teddy Ball 2019: Benefiting Cruise 4 Kids. 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Hyatt Regency La Jolla, 3777 La Jolla Village Drive, San Diego. \$80 to \$175. thetedyball.com

Looking ahead

DEC. 1 Unleash the Holiday Cheer: Benefiting local animal rescue organizations and the military community. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. 2455 Cushing Road, San Diego. Up to \$10. tracispaw-s.org

DEC. 3 Gingerbread City Gala: Benefiting the Epilepsy Foundation. 6 to 9 p.m. Hyatt Regency La Jolla at Aventine, 3777 La Jolla Village Drive, San Diego. epilepsysandiego.org

DEC. 5 Winter Wonderland Fashion Show & Luncheon: Benefiting The Arc of San Diego. 10:30 a.m. US Grant Hotel, 326 Broadway, San Diego. \$100 to \$150. (619) 685-1175. arc-sd.com/winterwonderland

DEC. 14 Bonjour! Time for Tea: Benefiting local arts education through Friends of East County Arts, Inc. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Holy Trinity Parish Hall, 405 Ballard St., El Cajon. \$60 per person. RSVP by Dec. 1. friendsofecarts.org

Streets of Hope San Diego Holiday Fundraiser: Benefiting Streets of Hope. 5 to 9 p.m. 1425 Garnet Ave., San Diego. \$20 to \$30. streetsofhopesandiego.org

DEC. 19

Seany Movie Night "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker": Benefiting The Seany Foundation. 6 to 11:30 p.m. UltraStar Cinemas Mission Valley, Hazard Center, 7510 Hazard Center Drive, San Diego. \$35 to \$65. seanyfoundation.org

ONGOING Crochet for a Cause: 5 to 6 p.m. each Wednesday at the Otay Ranch Library, Otay Ranch Town Center, 2015 Birch Road, No. 409, Chula Vista. This group is for all levels and will crochet caps for infants who are born premature. Participants will crochet side-by-side and do not need to provide their own materials. Information: (619) 397-5740.

Email calendar items at least two weeks in advance of the event to fortheirbenefit@sduniontribune.com.

COUNTY FAIR: ANDREA LOPEZ-VILLAFANA

Theme will celebrate everyday heroes

Next year's San Diego County Fair theme will go beyond the eye-catching elaborate props and staff costumes. It will celebrate real-life community heroes.

The theme, "Heroes, unite!" was announced last week for the annual four-week event at the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

County residents can nominate ordinary people — teachers, moms, first responders, veterans and more — who are making a difference in their community. The "community heroes" who are selected will be honored throughout the fair inside the Hall of Heroes exhibit.

Nominations are currently being accepted on the fair's website.

There will also be exhibits and events dedicated to celebrating all things superheroes. Visitors can test their own hero abilities with interactive challenges and learn more about the original heroes who started the cultural phenomenon in the 1930s.

"There is so much to love about being a hero," said Katie Mueller, deputy general manager of the Del Mar Fairgrounds in a

statement. "Whether it's kids in costumes imaging their superpowers to the real heroes who keep our communities safe and secure, this year's fair is all about discovering the hero within, and creating memorable experiences for the whole family."

The fair opens June 5 and runs through July 5.

Season passes, food vouchers and parking passes are available for purchase. The season pass, valid all 27 days of the fair, sells for \$27. The food vouchers are on sale until Dec. 31 for \$20 compared to regular price \$25.

Single day parking passes are also on sale until Dec. 31 for \$18.

The entertainment for the Toyota Summer Concert Series at the fair has not been announced but concert tickets are set to go on sale in January.

The fair draws more than 1.5 million visitors annually. Tickets and more information can be found online at sdfair.com.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

DESTINED FOR A CAREER IN LAW

In 1979, after a long career as a prosecutor Elizabeth Riggs was appointed to the El Cajon Municipal Court by then-Gov. Jerry Brown, becoming the first African-American woman ever to serve as a judge in San Diego County.

Riggs remained the only black female judge on the county trial court for more than two decades. Riggs died in 2017 at the age of 75.

In this 1979 interview, the pioneering jurist spoke to Union reporter Virginia Spiller about her life and career.

From The San Diego Union, Saturday, November 24, 1979:

NEW EL CAJON JUDGE SEEMED DESTINED FOR A CAREER IN LAW

By Virginia Spiller, Staff Writer, The San Diego Union

EL CAJON — That Elizabeth Riggs became a lawyer did not surprise her friends and relatives. They just assumed that.

"I was mouth almighty," she said. "I would argue a point to the death as a child."

However, even they may not have reckoned that Riggs would be a judge, a position she attained when she was chosen to fill a vacancy on the El Cajon Municipal Court bench.

Riggs, 37, a deputy state attorney general based in San Diego,

was at her job the morning of Nov. 16 when Gov. Brown's office telephoned to ask if she would be interested in the position. "You bet I am," she said. Her appointment was announced a few hours later.

When she was sworn in officially last Wednesday, she became the first black woman judge in San Diego County.

Although relatives and friends said Riggs was going to grow up to be a lawyer when she was just a little girl, she did not consider studying law until the 1960s when she took part in the first civil rights sit-ins, which were in



Greensboro, N.C.

"We used to sit in at Woolworth's and at the movie house," she said. "Believe me, that just was not something a 'Bennett young lady' did."

At the time, Riggs was attending Bennett College, a Methodist girls' school in Greensboro that was called "the Vassar of the South."

"They locked the campus gates at 6 p.m.," Riggs said. "And a 'Bennett young lady' never left the campus without being properly dressed. That meant hat, gloves, the whole thing, even if one was just running an errand into Greensboro."

"But it was a dynamite school,"

she said. The teachers had Ph.D.s, and they meant for us to learn."

The sit-ins convinced her that law was the only way to assure rights, said Riggs, who supports the Equal Rights Amendment.

"We already should have equal rights under the Constitution," she said in an interview. "But obviously we do not. The ERA will reinforce the Constitution in support of those rights."

Her parents had prepared her for prejudice against blacks, she said.

"But the first time I ran into sexist discrimination was in Camden when I made my first appearance as a certified law student before a judge.

"He said, 'What's a nice little lady like you doing in a place like this?' I was totally unprepared for that."

A graduate of Rutgers Law School in Camden, N.J., Riggs says she has never doubted her own ability and sees her appointment as a stepping stone on a road she hopes will lead to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"When I sit on the federal Supreme Court — if I get to the Supreme Court, I will put some women in at various levels in that all-male conclave," she says.

Riggs, who is involved in several organizations concerned with minorities in the county, believes the county does not publicize and take advantage of its wide range of minority cultures as much as it should from the standpoints of both tourism and internal county development.

"Minority cultures contribute so much," she says, adding, "But in some respects, minorities are going to have to conform."

"I believe every minority should treasure and keep its own culture, but if those cultures conflict with our laws, then those parts of their cultures must be abolished."

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB