Prize Turkey Was Stuffed with Surprises

THE THANKSGIVING that stands out for me was in 1944, when I was in 10th grade, in Pennsburg, in rural southeast Pennsylvania.

The senior class was selling tickets for a turkey raffle—10¢ a chance or three for 25¢.

Dolly, one of the seniors, approached me to buy some tickets. I was intimidated by this upperclassman. Without thinking, I promised to buy 20¢ or 50¢ worth.

Mom was a widow with children to raise, so she had to watch every cent. At first, she said no, but she later changed her mind and gave me a dime as a compromise.

How could I go back to school and tell a senior that I could buy only one ticket?

I was relieved when Dolly wasn't mad at me and gave her my dime.

Three weeks later, in a school assembly, my friend Doris, one who was always clowning, knocked me off my chair. Panic struck when I heard my name called.

Now what did I do?

"You just won a turkey," I was told. I couldn't wait to get home to tell my mom.

The turkey was delivered to our door that very evening. A knock came at the door, but when we opened it, my mom, my sister and I were in for a surprise. Two boys were holding a live turkey, a live 35-pound turkey. We had no idea that the bird would be alive.

My mom tied a harness around the turkey and put it in the back-yard. A neighbor volunteered to pen it until it could be “dressed.”

Our next dilemma was the size of the turkey. It wouldn’t fit in our oven, so we had to take it to a local bakery to have it roasted.

When we sat down for Thanksgiving Day to eat our turkey, we had so much to be thankful for, even though we were praying for the war to end and for my brother to return home.

I managed to save the wishbone of that first turkey I’d ever eaten and painted it with nail polish.

The wishbone eventually crumbled with age, but I managed to show it to my five children and tell them about that wild and won-derful Thanksgiving.

—Lillian D., Red Hill, Pennsylvania