

GRATITUDE

Sorry I've been absent for the last week.

While I was in Brussels my mother had a fall – the first really serious one after 16 years of a Parkinson's diagnosis. She's okay, but she and her housing community decided it marked a good time to move her into assisted living.

Mr. EW and I spent all week in southeast Pennsylvania with my brothers working towards moving my mother out of the apartment she has lived in for 6 years. We sorted through the better part of the lifetime of pictures and heirlooms and books and keepsakes she has acquired in her life – mom's Girl Scout sash, my brother's first grade assignment, the tablecloth my great-grandmother made, the turkey platter mom made 40 years ago.

It brought a special kind of reflection to this holiday of gratitude. Thanks, most of all, for all my mom has given me over my life – the intangible things, the education, the comfort, the advantages. In the year ahead, in the face of the challenges we face as a country, I aim to redouble my efforts to repay to society the gifts I've been given.

Thanks to Rayne and bmaz and Ed and everyone else for keeping the likker cabinet flowing all week. And thanks to our readers for joining in the conversation.

As always on Thanksgiving, I like to remember those (not all in Michigan, this year, on account of the travel) who contributed to our feast. I told a woman at mom's community that I had brought a turkey from Michigan; she sniffed, "oh, do they make turkeys better out there?" But when we served it, everyone agreed the care that Jill and Mary put in makes for a better tasting bird. The bacon on top of the turkey this year came from a Lancaster-based pork company, Clyde Weavers.

Because I forgot my cookbooks, I made a

different pumpkin pie recipe this year. The pumpkin came from an older Michigan farmer who does just a wide variety of squashes and eggplants (he brings his grandson to market most days). I had steamed the pumpkin and ground the spices before I left. For those who followed on Twitter, I *did* use some leftover Five Spice powder (with added ginger) for one of the pies, and it worked great. The flour came from a farm about an hour from here. They had been selling their own self-ground flour some years ago, but then stopped; this year the daughter and her husband showed up to market one day with the same great organic wheat flour as I had gotten years earlier. I like the way the nuttiness of the wheat compliments the pumpkin. My sister-in-law, who couldn't make the trip, sent several pies from Picasso pastry in Syracuse, and the pecan pie was quite welcome.

We also brought Verterra wines – a couple of Pinot Noirs – from MI, which was a good thing as there was a “glitch” at the state stores in SE PA on Wednesday.

We've got a tough haul in front of us. Let's remember all the gifts and benefits we bring to that challenge.