

# We Are 14 at Thanksgiving Dinner

by ROBERT HAGAN

Photos by John Rees from Black Star



Happy and humorous attitude toward life is indicated by sign in front of home where the 14 Hagans live just outside of Youngstown, Ohio.



Bob Hagan does family shopping. Kids meet him when he comes home, unload station wagon. He calls it his "safari," gives each one a load to carry.



Jackie, nine, and Bobby, ten, team up to carry in pumpkin from garden. Hagans raise many of the vegetables they consume.

THANKSGIVING is definitely one of the family holidays, and in many of our friends' homes next Thursday preparations will include scrounging for extra dining-room chairs to seat grandmother and grandfather, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews. It's just such a large group that turns the dinner into a feast. But at our home near Youngstown, Ohio, 14 of us will take our places round the table—my wife Ada and I and our 12 children. As a matter of fact, we are 14 for breakfast and lunch, too, and at our house every meal is a kind of Thanksgiving feast.

Ada and I have an even dozen reasons to be thankful—six boys and six girls. From the oldest twins, 15-year-old Kathleen and Maureen, to one-year-old Susan, we think we have the best family in the world. But Thanksgiving has other special meanings for us, too. We moved into our home the day before Thanksgiving nine years ago. Our family was growing fast, and the construction business I started after getting out of the Navy wasn't growing as fast as I'd hoped. In fact, it almost looked as if Ada and I might have to board some of the kids with relatives. Then things picked up, we found this house, and have added five kids to our family.

Another special Thanksgiving celebration is for Susan. Our youngest child was born the day after the holiday last year, so this will be her first Thanksgiving with us.

"How do you do it?" is a question all our friends ask. Both Ada and I agree it's easier with 12 than it was with six babies, now that the older children can help. And they really do help. Ada does the cooking and laundry; the kids do the rest.

It also helps that my wife and I are easygoing. We try not to get annoyed with little things and to take the big ones in stride. And there are big things, believe me: two appendectomies, one case of polio, a broken arm, a broken collarbone, and five cases of whooping cough at one time.

We don't like to give advice to our friends about raising kids because every family is different, but if we have one rule for ourselves, it's "Take it easy. Do what you can, train the children to look after themselves, and love one another."

I think we really enjoy ourselves most at such a time as Thanksgiving. All of us dig in to help. We carry in the groceries in a grand procession, and the boys drag in the biggest pumpkin they can find in the garden. The kids take turns chopping onions for the stuffing—until the tears flow. But the best job is mine—carrying in the turkey.

It's a big day. But with a family of 14, every day is like Thanksgiving.



Making the stuffing brings out eight youngsters to cut bread, celery, and onions. Onions make Kathleen weep, so twin sister slices.

*This Youngstown, Ohio, couple has 12 special reasons to be thankful next Thursday—12 wonderful children*

Climax of preparations comes when Bob Hagan carries in 24-lb. turkey. Children's places at table are ranked according to age.



Jokingly, Ada Hagan confronts youngest child, Susan, with her first turkey drumstick. Susan responds eagerly.



Excitement is too much for Monica who is two-and-a-half. She falls asleep at dinner, and Bob puts her to bed.