



Harry Golden has success to give thanks for, yet he retains down-to-earth ways in Charlotte, N. C., home.

*To the humble people of the world,
a day of Thanksgiving has always been important—
and never more so than in this era*

THANK YOU,

TO MANY PEOPLE, Thanksgiving Day is synonymous with "visiting the brother-in-law." Things are usually pleasant during such visits, but sometimes they get hectic.

I remember one Thanksgiving Day in the mid-'20s when my brother-in-law, whose name is Gallagher, and I fell into a political argument and, apropos of nothing, I said that the fellow who shot New York's Mayor Gaynor—"his name was Gallagher, too."

My brother-in-law took this information as a personal affront and said it was libel.

We spent the afternoon trying to reach the *New York Times* or the *Sun* or the New York Public Library to find out who *did* shoot Gaynor. Somebody finally told us, "Hey, don't you two know it's Thanksgiving?" so along about 11 at night Gallagher and I took a walk and vowed that we'd call the library the next day and settle our dispute.

But the next morning when we spoke to one another, we pointedly avoided the argument and probably felt a little ashamed that we had wasted such a holiday pointlessly.

Thanksgiving should be a time of fellowship as well as spirituality. And it seems to me that while I was growing up (after World War I), it also became something else important.

Along with the reverence we paid to the Pilgrims and the veneration we gave to Lincoln's preservation of the Union, we began to be thankful for our role in history. On Thanksgiving Day we not only thanked God that we were free, but that we were brave and strong.

But the Cold War has brought a change, and it is hard to go back and recapture only the Pilgrim ideals and the Lincoln spirituality on Thanksgiving Day. Most of us realize that we are in a desperate race against a political force that would strip man of his individual dignity and make of him a faceless being.

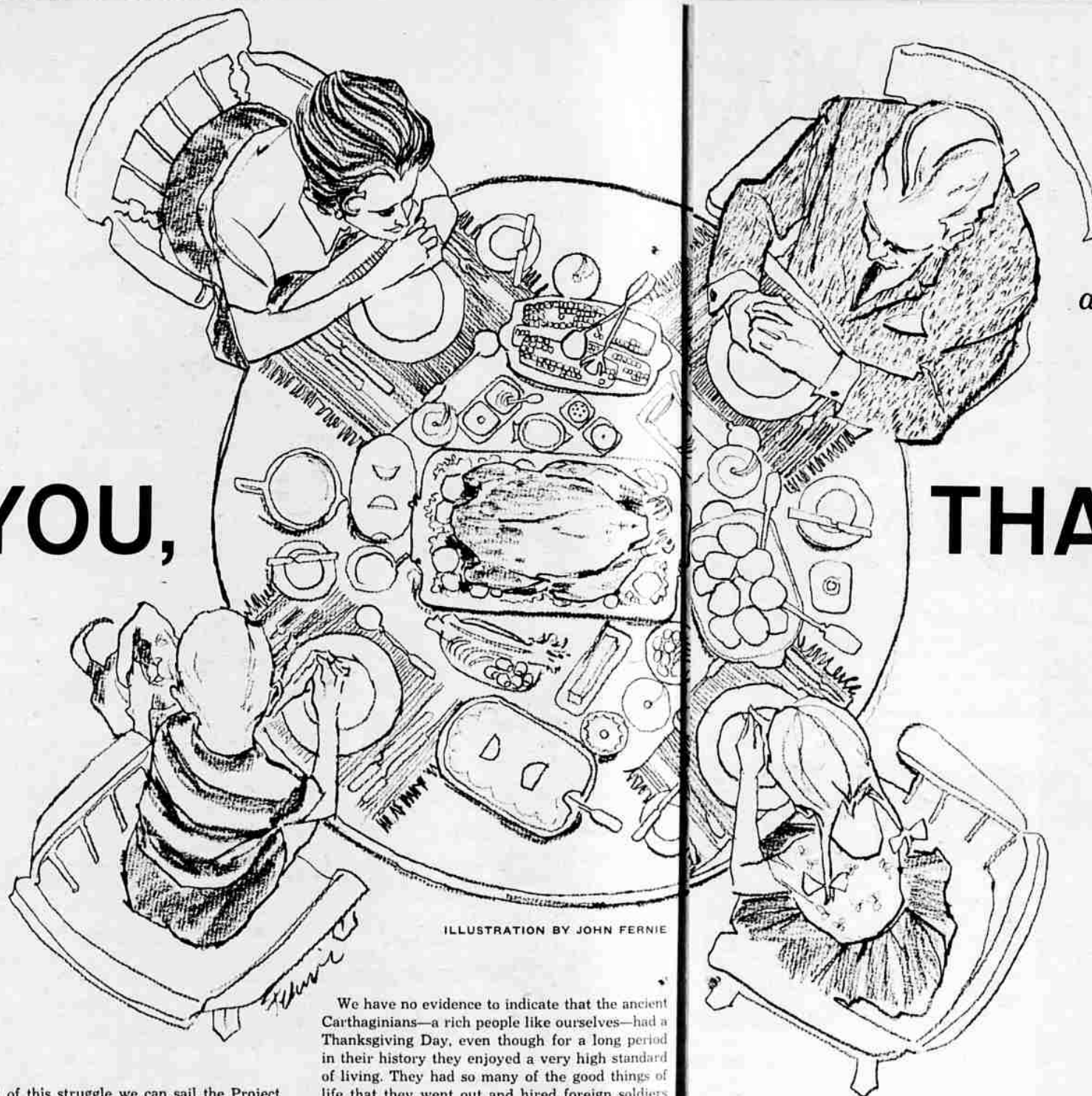


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN FERNIE

We have no evidence to indicate that the ancient Carthaginians—a rich people like ourselves—had a Thanksgiving Day, even though for a long period in their history they enjoyed a very high standard of living. They had so many of the good things of life that they went out and hired foreign soldiers to defend them.

Then came the Romans who were still in their hungry days, in their days when the field commander slept on the ground with his legionaries. The Carthaginians offered them their children as hostages if only they would let them go on a little longer with their high standard of living.

And instead of a Thanksgiving Day, the Carthaginians cut off their hair as a sacrifice, and when that didn't work they built a great fire and threw their unmarried girls into it, all in an attempt to propitiate the gods—and all in vain.

They had no Thanksgiving Day because Thanksgiving Day is the most modest of celebrations.

All it involves is gratitude for life, for sustenance, and for human freedom.

The Hebrews had a Thanksgiving Day. Long before

the discovery of America the Hebrews had the idea of *todah* or *hoday*, literally translated, "to give thanks" and used in the sense of "to praise," "to acknowledge," and "to confess." For 3,000 years the idea was based on gratitude toward God, and it began with the ancient dictum: "For each and every breath that a man draws, let him praise God."

This idea of gratitude and the awareness that they had received and were daily receiving many benefits and gifts from God, so deep-seated in the hearts of the ancient Hebrews, were used by the Pilgrims in establishing their Mayflower Compact. They were actually adopting the Hebrew concept of *todah*—giving thanks.

The Thanksgiving Day gathering of 1960 can see

through any picture window the revolution going on among the people. Some of our families will suffer a momentary shudder at the loss of old values we used to celebrate, such as thrift and humility. Some of us might even wonder at the phenomenon wherein all our modern material gains do not guarantee either happiness or peace of mind, and we'll ask—why?

Unfortunately, we can't forget any of these problems on Thanksgiving Day. The time has come and past when we can leave our troubles for even one or two days a year. On this day, as on any other day, many of our planes will be in the air to guard against surprise attack, and the policemen on the street will have to be doubly vigilant.

What then do we have to be thankful for? For one thing, we must be thankful for our past; and for another—our future.

THOSE BASIC plans that the early Americans laid to give a greater share of human dignity to each individual are still successful plans. We should be thankful that they are likely to remain so. We are not that far removed from those beleaguered Pilgrims who weathered a terrible winter, who spent a year scratching at the hard rocks of New England to produce a garden, and who sat down a year later to thank God for His beneficence.

The basic plans were fulfilled without wrenching the traditional security of the family which every philosopher had prophesied was imperative in any utopia.

Family security in our democracy, even with the threats that now surround it, still remains inviolate. Remember that the Communists, like the Fascists and the Nazis, understand the strength of familial loyalty—and they fear it. To gain perfect loyalty for the state, they know that the family ties must be eliminated. The first thing they do is to establish "youth" groups and insist categorically

on widespread youth activities *outside* the home.

America still has use for, and still needs, its Thanksgiving Day. It is a unique holiday, the only holiday like it throughout the world. Along the Lower East Side of New York City 50 years ago, the Jewish immigrants celebrated Thanksgiving Day on the day they got off the boat. "Thanksgiving" was an old holiday to them. All the immigrants celebrated Thanksgiving before they had ever heard of the Fourth of July!

UNLIKE the native born, the immigrant did not take the holiday for granted. It was not just a day off from work with a banquet thrown in for good measure. The immigrants thanked God for a multitude of benefits, especially for the freedom to enter our open society at will. All you had to do is work hard and you could take the Fifth Avenue bus and enter America at any level. There was no one to stop you. You thanked God for the free schools and libraries, and your mother said in broken English, "In America you can become—an anything."

Because America is not a place, America is not geography. America is an Idea, an Idea without parallel in the history of mankind because only America has offered this freedom to enter the open society on the basis of your own capacity.

There were millions of immigrants who disembarked at Ellis Island in New York who couldn't speak a word of English, but many were to have sons and daughters become English teachers in our high schools and colleges. Nowhere on this earth has there been a parallel to this Idea—this uniqueness of America.

Thanksgiving Day celebrates our gratitude for this uniqueness—this Idea without parallel any place. In an age where more and more men elsewhere in the world are becoming rootless, let us breathe prayerfully to God for America and say: "Thank you, thank you!"