

# Henry makes holiday feast special

Ben Penny and his family lived on a farm near Ridgcrest. His wife Sandy and their two children, Lad and Sue were the pride of his life. Being a farm family gave him many opportunities to teach his children some valuable lessons. Holidays provided the ideal setting for those lessons.

As Ben was thinking about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, he was also giving some thought to how his children could see a greater value in the holidays, than just a time for eating and playing. If Mr. Penny had known what the next two weeks would bring, he might have turned his thoughts elsewhere.

Just as he was about to give up because he had no idea for teaching his children a lesson this Thanksgiving, a mental picture of a turkey flashed into his mind. He must be hungry, he thought. The image of a big juicy bird on the Thanksgiving table was a pleasant picture to enjoy.

Thinking about the turkey gave him the idea for which he had been searching: "Why not buy a live bird and give Lad and Sue the responsibility of fattening him for Thanksgiving," he pondered. "Two weeks was plenty of time to get a bird plump," he thought. Grant Willis raised turkeys for the market. He was sure Grant would sell him one. It occurred to him he would be wise to check with Sandy to see how she liked the idea.

Mrs. Penny had her own ideas about how the children should be reared. She usually agreed with Ben. If they disagreed, it was never in front of the children.

When her husband approached her about the turkey, she was skeptical. The more Ben talked, the more he convinced her it would work. Her only concern was that the children would become attached to the turkey and not want to butcher it for Thanksgiving. She would warn them about keeping their emotions and the turkey separated.

When told about the idea, Sue and Lad loved it. They were at the age everything was cool or neat. It was agreed the children would feed the bird, and the day before Thanksgiving Lad would butcher it. Mr. Penny further stated Lad would take the turkey after he had butchered it to Mrs. Jones for plucking and preparing for the oven. She was in the business of helping families with special arrangements when they did not have the time to handle all of the details for their holiday feast. The Penny children were cautioned repeatedly about not becoming attached to the bird. Lad assured mother and



By Raz Autry

father since he would soon be a man it was all business with him.

"Gobble, gobble," was the first strange sound the children heard after dinner.

"Hey, dad got the turkey," yelled Lad, as he rushed to cuddle the fowl.

"Oh, what a pretty turkey," squealed Sue.

"Wait a minute children," said the parents. "Remember our agreement, you are not supposed to get attached to him, and it is a him."

Pretending not to hear, Lad said, "I am going to call him Henry."

"What sad brown eyes he has," marveled Sue.

"I don't think it is a good idea to name him," replied father. "After all, he will only be a pleasant memory after Thanksgiving. A name will cause you problems later."

Sandy caught herself looking at his eyes. "They were so sad and brown," she thought. "Will you listen to me," she smiled. "I am acting like the children."

"Don't worry about me dad," boasted Lad. "He is only meat to me." With a smirk on his face he said, "little sister, you stay away, I will handle ol Henry, then you can help eat him at Thanksgiving without crying."

"Stop teasing your sister young man," warned mother. "Both of you will feed the turkey."

"You can't learn to accept responsibility without working together," cautioned father.

Every day the children fed and watered the bird. The turkey enjoyed eating, and he began to show the results. He would be a juicy, plump bird by the Thanksgiving holiday.

It was noticeable to Mrs. Penny, Lad and Sue were not fully separating their emotions from the bird. Henry, as they continue to call him, followed Lad around like a puppy. Sue was forever rubbing his head and looking at those sad brown eyes. She felt it was best to say nothing else about their emotions. It seemed to only make it worse when she did talk to them about it.

The day before Thanksgiving arrived. Mr. Penny reminded Lad it was time to butcher the turkey and get him to Mrs. Jones. After a con-

versation with the boy, he was convinced Lad had everything under control and could handle the job.

When Lad started to leave the house headed for the barnyard, he yelled at Sue and said, "sister see this hatchet, I am going to get ol Henry ready for the feast. Do you want to watch?"

Instead of replying, Sue ran to her room and closed the door.

"I hope this burst of emotions doesn't mean we are in for a sad holiday," thought mother. "I should not have let Ben talk me into letting them have a live turkey."

Mrs. Jones called at 8 p.m. and said the turkey was ready. "It might be wise to let Ben go for the bird," reasoned Sandy. When informed, Lad would have none of it. He insisted since he was man enough to butcher the turkey, he should be allowed to finish the job. Father agreed.

Thanksgiving morning brought the smell of delicious food cooking. No one mentioned the turkey, but it had an unmistakable aroma. Golden brown bird was surrounded by candied yams, greens, peas and a fruit salad. To top off the meal was pumpkin pie. This spread greeted the family as they gathered for the Thanksgiving meal.

Sue still had the sad look she displayed the evening before but tried to be cheerful for the occasion. Lad was boasting as usual.

Blessing the food and giving thanks for the many things enjoyed in life was a standard procedure in the Penny household. After the solemn moments the family enjoyed together, father prepared to carve the turkey.

"Who wants the first piece of bird," he teased. An already pale Sue turned even more pale, burst into tears and ran from the room. Mother gave father an unforgettable look and went after her.

Shaken, but still determined father said, "well Lad it looks as if it will be you and me. When you taste this bird all other thoughts will be wiped from your mind," he joked.

Lad developed a deep red color as if he stayed in the sun too long.

Suddenly his lips puckered up and he buried his head in his hands. No longer was he a man as he claimed to be. He reminded Mr. Penny of a lonely little boy. Cuddling him in his arms, father assured him not to fret about the turkey. He had accepted the responsibility. "Why didn't I take mother's warning," he thought. "I could have taught him responsibility in another way."

"Dad," whispered lad through

tears, "I am sorry I disobeyed you."

"Son, you didn't disobey me, you did what I asked, how could I have expected more from you?"

"But dad, you don't understand, I didn't kill Henry, I couldn't."

"What, yelled Mr. Penny, "you didn't kill the turkey? Where did you get this turkey?"

"From Mrs. Jones," sniffed Lad between tears. "When I told her about Henry, she said she understood. Mrs. Jones insisted I take another bird. She agreed to keep Henry until after Thanksgiving."

Mr. Penny was grinning from ear to ear. "Thank goodness," he glowed "I can forgive you for disobeying me this time. You saved our holiday. You go get Henry from Mrs. Jones. When you get back, I will get mother and Sue."

"Mother," moaned Sue, I didn't mean to make our Thanksgiving dinner unpleasant, but I couldn't stand to see father carve Henry. I couldn't eat any part of him, I am sorry I didn't listen to you."

"I know honey, I know, everything will be all right. Can you keep a secret? I couldn't have eaten Henry either. You saved me from having to leave the table."

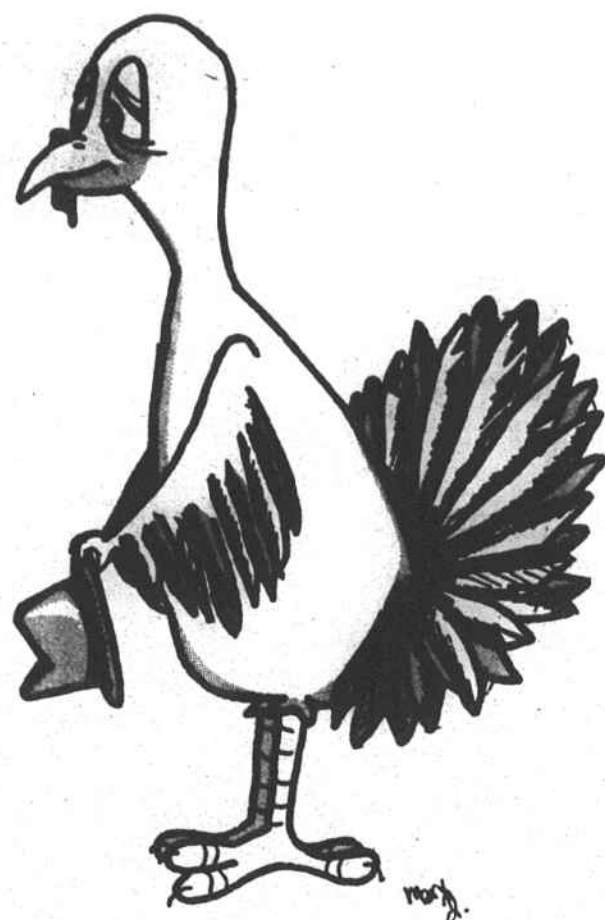
"Gobble, gobble," echoed throughout the house.

"Mother, I can imagine I hear Henry," whispered Sue.

"Daughter," said a puzzled mother, "that is not your imagination, I hear a turkey." Just as she finished speaking, the door opened wide and in walked Henry, with wings straight out and those sad brown eyes on no-one but Sue.

Mr. Penny hurriedly explained what happened before the questions started. Lad stood silently in the corner, for once not knowing what to say. Mothers have a way of assuring their children all is right and forgiven. This mother was no exception. As she gathered Lad in her arms, Henry cuddled with Sue.

What a special joy this Thanksgiving turned out to be, a lesson was learned by the Penny family. They would always remember nothing stands in the way of love when everyone becomes a part of it. As for Henry, he enjoyed the love and the special feast of corn and stuffing. The Penny family enjoyed Mrs. Jones' bird who was born to be eaten.



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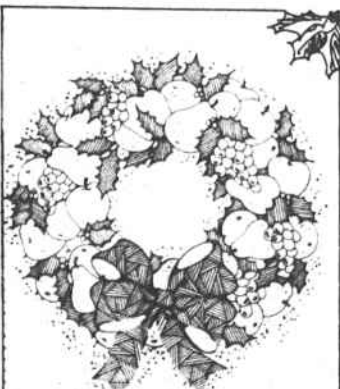
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