

## Hey, You Stole My Pumpkin Pie

*By Liz Gibbons*

For several years, starting when I was probably six or seven, our family would go to a small nearby town, Oxford, Indiana, for Thanksgiving dinner at the Presbyterian Church. Thankfully, after two or three years, gas rationing during World War II halted this before it could become a family tradition.

Oxford was 20 miles from our home in West Lafayette. I was very familiar with Oxford for that is where my paternal grandmother had grown up, and my father had spent some of his childhood years there. Grandmother, who now lived in West Lafayette, had inherited two parcels of farm land near Oxford, which my father managed for her. This required my father to go to Oxford regularly during the growing season to see the tenant farmers and to check on the crops. In my younger years my mother, brother and I often accompanied him, my brother and I sometimes doing so reluctantly.

The Thanksgiving dinner was prepared by the church ladies. As we entered the church hall there were big round tables set up with silverware, glasses, napkins and a serving of pie at each place setting. People were chatting with one another. Most of them were strangers to me. There were no other young children, and nothing fun to do. I felt bored and uncomfortable.

As the room filled, my Dad indicated we should choose a table, which we did. As we were standing around the chosen table I noticed that two older woman also planned to sit at this table, which was fine until one said to the other, "I prefer pumpkin pie," and they deftly took the pumpkin pie from the place settings over which my brother and I were standing and replaced them with a pie whose filling looked like small pale green eyeballs. My insides were screaming at them, "You're taking our pie!" but being shy and having been taught to be nice, it was impossible to say that to an adult.

When it came time to eat dessert my father said it was gooseberry pie. I had no idea what gooseberries were, but that pie was not going to pass my lips. I had never eaten green pie (this was before I discovered key lime pie), and I wasn't about to even taste this mysterious looking piece of green pie. I resented those two old ladies who I felt had stolen my brother's and my pumpkin pie, and to this day I have never eaten gooseberry pie, nor even tasted gooseberries. And they sure aren't on my bucket list of experiences to do before I die.

Being curious, I googled "What are gooseberries?" and learned that the federal government banned their growth in the U.S. for many years because some gooseberries harbored a fungal disease that could spread and kill white pine trees. I lean more toward a libertarian view of less government control in our lives, but this is one regulation that I am glad was passed. It saved me from having to deal with those strange green globules.