

A Colorful Thanksgiving

By Sheila Johnson

The bright new sun warmly greeted us with a resounding “Good morning,” as it glistened through the thick, green palm leaves that were already fanning us with the breath of the ocean. Although we were ALL famished, dipping their toes in the warm Caribbean waters of the Dominican Republic seemed to be more important than food to my three adult children and my granddaughter Angel. The youngest member of our family at the time, Layton, was squishing wet sand between his small brown toes making lasting footprints on his grandmother’s heart. He and I held back from the others; instead we buried our bodies under the moist sand while the rest of the clan caught waves that were crashing down upon the earth’s receding hairline with syncopation. After several rides on the ocean’s back, it gently and safely returned them to shore.

The wait staff at the hotel generously and graciously accommodated our family’s dietary needs. All of us are lactose intolerant, Michelle can only digest gluten-free food, Layton’s food had to be crunchy in texture, and none of us do well with cheese. The friendly, short, brown, Spanish-speaking waiters were exemplary in their service and courteousness as we enjoyed the delectable food, and the hospitality and beauty of their country. This was the beginning of a great vacation and many memories, as well as a few friends, were made.

The flora was breathtaking! If my memory serves me well, most of the flowers grew in bouquets; none existed alone. From baby pink to deep rose; from sea-mist green to dark jade; from buttercream yellow to mustard yellow; from lilac to royal purple — every color of the rainbow was represented. The diversity of tree bark was amazing: dark brown to light gray; smooth as a baby’s bottom to chunky and splintery; soft as mulch to hard as steel.

In my broken Spanish, I managed to share with the restaurant staff that we would normally be observing Thanksgiving during that week in the US, but we’d rather be in a beautiful place of quiet and peace as opposed to being with a large group of people. Low and behold, the next day when we arrived for dinner, they had prepared a luxuriously delicious Thanksgiving meal complete with turkey and dressing and all the trimmings — just for us! What a treat. It was the largest turkey we had ever seen, and I was afraid to ask if it were really a turkey. If it looked like a turkey, smelled like a turkey, and tasted like a turkey, it must have been a turkey. Our neighbors to the south showered us with love and creativity. They even prepared fresh cranberry salad, baked decorative bread, green beans, macaroni and cheese, and a variety of vegetables native only to their country. The fruit drinks, alcoholic and non, were divine! The beauty of our family vacation that year was beyond any Rembrandt, van Gogh, or Picasso!