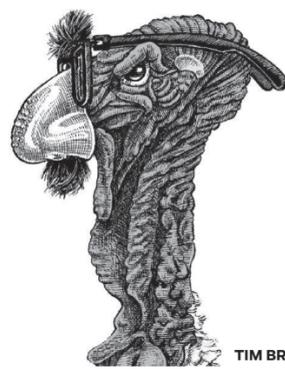


PERSPECTIVE

10 things you might not know about TURKEY



TIM BRINTON ILLUSTRATION

By MARK JACOB
AND STEPHAN BENZKOFE

As we approach Thanksgiving, you're welcome to 10 helpings of these turkey facts:

1 Hunting a wild turkey is exceedingly difficult. The bird may appear dumb and slow, but looks can be deceiving. In fact, Tom Turkey has fantastic hearing, amazing eyesight, can flat-out run (15 mph and three-foot strides) and can fly even faster. And he is paranoid — because everyone is out to get him — so he'll flee at the slightest provocation.



AP PHOTO

Howard Hughes tried and failed to get his preferred dessert with his turkey TV dinner.



JASON LIEBIG PHOTO

2 Eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes liked Swanson's frozen TV dinners, especially the turkey entree. But Hughes was a picky eater. He didn't approve of Swanson's mixing of white and dark meat. And he wished the dinner came with a dessert of peach cobbler rather than apple cobbler. Through an aide, Hughes asked Swanson's to switch to peach cobbler in its turkey dinners. When Swanson's refused, Hughes tried to buy the company but was unsuccessful.

3 In the spring, a wild male turkey's head can turn a brilliant red, white or blue, often changing in just seconds. That fact was not one of Benjamin Franklin's arguments for why the turkey would be a better national symbol than the bald eagle.

4 Joe Engel, an executive with the minor league Chattanooga Lookouts baseball team, was famous for stunts, such as having his players ride into the ballpark on elephants. The topper came in 1931 when he traded his shortstop to Charlotte for a Thanksgiving turkey. The trade turned out badly, he said, because the turkey meat was tough.



TRIBUNE PHOTO 1911

The turkey trot was once a scandalous dance. Now it's a common name for November road race not known to offend anyone.



ETIENNE CARJAT/GETTY IMAGES

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini

5 Before the Turkey Trot became the go-to name for a 5K race in November, it was a controversial ragtime-style dance in the early 1900s. It was considered quite vulgar, and it was often banned, which, of course, just made it insanely popular.

6 Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini claimed that he wept only three times in his life: when his opera "Tancredi" was booed on opening night, when he heard Nicolo Paganini play the violin and when his truffle-stuffed turkey fell out of a boat during a picnic.

7 Playwright Arthur Miller and his wife, photographer Inge Morath, were counterfeited carnivores during Thanksgiving. "Since we're vegetarians," Morath told The New York Times in 1981, "I usually make a pretend turkey out of vegetables — a piece montee. I put a loaf of bread underneath, and over the top I arrange carrots, leeks, beans, apples, all kinds of cold cooked and raw vegetables, Chinese vegetables bought at Korean markets, like a painting. With pieces of avocado I make beautiful wings. It looks more like a live turkey than a dead one."

8 If an adult male turkey is a tom, what's a young male turkey? A jake.

9 During family Christmas celebrations, Gen. George Patton turned the carving of the turkey into a circus act. He waved the knife like a saber, explained that



Gen. George Patton

the warrior Saladin wielded a sword so sharp it could cut a floating feather in half, then he shouted a rebel yell and plunged a carving fork into the turkey's breast. His daughter Ruth Ellen recalled: "Then he would carefully withdraw

the fork, put his ear to the turkey's breast, nod in a sad, wise way, and say, 'She's gone alright,' and then start carving."

10 If you feel like taking a nap after your Thanksgiving feast, don't blame the turkey. The whole tryptophan-in-the-turkey-makes-you-sleepy idea is a myth. In fact, turkey doesn't contain any more tryptophan than many other meats. The real culprit is the sheer quantity of food you just inhaled.

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Sources: "Hunting Tough Turkeys" by Brian Lovett; "Hunting the First State: A Guide to Delaware Hunting" by Steven Kendus; "Howard Hughes: The Hidden Years" by James Phelan; "The Private Correspondence of Benjamin Franklin, Vol. 1"; National Wildlife Turkey Federation; "The Gourmet Cookbook" edited by Ruth Reichl; "The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances" by Mark Knowles; "General Patton: A Soldier's Life" by Stanley Hirshson; heritageturkey-foundation.org; snopes.com; baseball-reference.com; engelfoundation.com; New York Times; Tribune archives.

Welcome home, college freshman. XOXO

By BARBARA MAHANY

I've been imagining the sound for months: his footsteps.

The house has been hollow without them, the thud I came to know as his as he stumbled out of the bed, the gallop as he loped down the stairs.

I can almost feel the gust of the wind as the front door swings open and in pops that curly haired mop I last buried my nose in on a hot August day when I left him on a leafy college quad, 1,000 miles away.

But any day now — I could tell you the hours and minutes — we are about to fall into the sweetest of homecomings, the freshman in college coming home for the very first time.

It's a film loop I've played in my mind over and over. Since way back before he was gone. It was, in many ways, a salve to the wound that was growing, deepening as

the day of his leaving finally arrived. Nearly swallowed me whole, that widening gash.

I've long savored the romance of November, when the light turns molasses, the air crisp, and planes fill the sky, the criss-crossing of hearts headed home. But never before had I felt it so deeply.

This year, one of those jets is carrying home my firstborn.

Now, all these months later, I can only imagine the boy who's more of a man now. Calls home just once a week, Sundays, after 5 p.m. "Circa 1975," I call it, just like when I was a freshman in college and had to wait for the rates to go down to report in to the folks back home.

It took me the better part of a month to get used to the missing sounds in our house. To not wince each night when I laid down three forks, not four. To not leave on the porch light as I climbed up to bed.

Over the months, I've learned to steer

It took me the better part of a month to not wince each night when I laid down three forks, not four.

clear of particular shelves in the grocery store, because they hold his favorites — the turkey jerky, the sharp cheddar, stuff I used to grab without thinking, his stuff.

Curiously, I haven't spent much time in his room. Except once, when I tackled the closet, folded every last T-shirt, rolled up loose socks, rubbing my hand over the cloth, absorbing the altered equation, that I was now the mother of a faraway child.

And so, I'm looking forward to when the place at the kitchen table will be ours again, the place where we talked until the

wee hours, poring over the landscape of his life, refining the art of listening, asking just the right questions.

I leapt out of bed days ago, scribbled a list of all the foods I wanted to buy, to tuck on the pantry shelves, to pack in the fridge. I flipped open a cookbook to a much splattered page, the recipe for one of his favorites. It's as if the alchemy of the kitchen will fill places that words cannot.

I can barely contain the tingling that comes with knowing that, any day, he'll be boarding a plane, crossing the sky, putting his hand on the knob on our door.

My beautiful boy, the boy I've missed more than I will ever let on, he's coming home to the house that's been aching to hear him again.

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