

Qry1#54/#5333#; In 1969, when I was 15 years old, I ran away to Canada. I know that in today's harsh climate of '60s bashing and family piety, I am supposed to say that this was a bad decision and an error of my youth. It wasn't and it wasn't.

What's rarely remembered or recounted about the '60s is that many of us, particularly during the last two years of that decade, were filled with paranoia, despair and a scary sense that the United States was blowing apart. Thomas Pynchon's "Vineland" is about the only thing I've ever read that gets that feeling of end times and desperation right: the military transports and Nixon's election and the body bags and questions about just who was an agent provocateur and whether there was strychnine in those tabs of acid.

Suffice it to say, I left home for motivations both personal and political. I did not like where this country was going and I had come to the end of the line in my own trajectory: Goodbye application

Also Today

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Sound Off

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WAYS TO GET SALON

Downloads

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to Radcliffe; goodbye to all I had loved. It was time to go and try something else, somewhere else, somewhere more benign.

I ended up at a free university and urban commune called Rochdale, named after the famous 19th century English workers cooperative. The people I crashed with there were almost cinematically perfect: a fellow who had been Joni Mitchell's manager, back when she was a starving folkie in Toronto (his wife was off making underground films in San Francisco -- I wasn't exactly sure what this meant, but it sounded lovely); a lanky, sardonic draft dodger from backwoods Pennsylvania by way of Florida's then-hippie enclave Coconut Grove; a former speed freak from the Maritimes; a sweet guy from a small town in Ontario who, not very many years later, would die of Lou Gehrig's disease; and some others I can't recall. Gentle souls all.

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I don't know why we decided to have an American Thanksgiving, but I assume it had something to do with a desire to reclaim the good things that America could be, and to assert the fond tribal connection we felt with one another.

I decided to take on the cooking of the turkey, although I had almost never cooked anything beyond scrambled eggs. I had no role models, either -- my mother hated cooking and was lousy at it. Even more important, I had always been a total spaz, with no grounding in the real world whatsoever: I had lousy handwriting, couldn't type and had no athletic ability or sense of balance or coordination. I couldn't draw or sing or knit or really do anything with my hands. I was so frustrated with my lack of hand-eye coordination that I used to have dreams about cutting off my hands.

But I figured that since I had been a decent chemistry student and could read and follow directions, I would venture to make the main course for the holiday. Given my appalling lack of experience, I can't imagine where I got the courage to try; but then, this was the first time in my life that I'd felt like a whole human being, not just the academic performance machine who skipped two grades to the delight of her parents.

Next page##t was an amazing experience 1, 2

Current Stories

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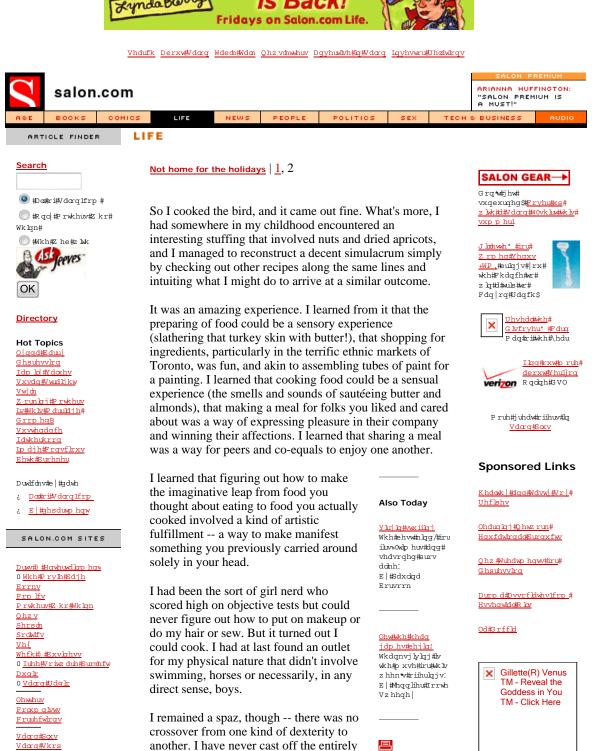
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Table Talk `Iuhh/#vslulwhq Vdorq#iruxp v

Current Stories

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inadvertent slapstick physical comedy

can't draw a straight line with a ruler,

can't parallel park when I'm tired.

can't fold a towel so it has right angles,

routines. People who meet me to this day are surprised that I can cook --- for I still

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Sound Off

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WAYS TO GET SALON

Downloads

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Now, almost 30 years later, if I were to re-create that Thanksgiving dinner in San Francisco, I am sure it would taste far better than what I cooked up in the communal kitchen on the 19th floor of that International Style building in downtown Toronto.

I could use a free-range turkey -- humanely raised and organically fed in the Sierra foothills. I might be able to purchase biodynamically farmed apricots imported (perhaps) from the foothills of the Himalayas under fairtrade practices, or almonds from heirloom varietals grown only in certain orchards on select hectares in the Sacramento Valley. The bread crumbs would probably come from an artisan bakery that routinely carries four kinds of baguettes, the butter from happy cows living on family farms in West Marin, cows whose existence not only helps preserve the Bay Area's greenbelt but provides a healthy livelihood for people in recovery.

But as we all know, there's a special sweetness to the first time, particularly when it works out so well. And that Thanksgiving remains the only one, perhaps, where I truly gave thanks, and knew what I was thankful for.

salon.com

About the writer

Paulina Borsook is the author of "Cyberselfish: A Critical Romp Through the Terribly Libertarian Culture of High-tech."

Sound Off

Send us a Letter to the Editor

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