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# Legal Reflections

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November 2021

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THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

## What Was on the Menu?

Every Thanksgiving, we gather with our families and friends and pig out. Turkey, cranberry sauce, and stuffing, oh my! But did the Pilgrims actually eat all the same foods we do today?

When we sit down at the Thanksgiving table, we are blessed with mashed potatoes, candied yams, green bean casserole, turkey, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. However, if we wanted to be historically accurate, we would need to change up that dinner spread a bit.

Historians know of a few foods on the table that Pilgrims and Wampanoags shared at Plymouth Colony in 1621. Wildfowl, corn (in grain form for porridge), and venison were sure to be served at the first Thanksgiving. Wild turkey was also a common and abundant food source but wasn't likely the

main course as it is today. A few days before the first Thanksgiving, the colony's governor put four men in charge of hunting for birds for the feast, and they very likely returned with some turkey.

However, as far as mashed potatoes are concerned, in the early 1600s, most Europeans and the Wampanoag had no idea what a potato was. They weren't cultivated in North America until the 1700s. Likewise, cranberries were still very new to the Pilgrims, and they didn't yet use them for food — instead, they used them to make dyes for fabrics!

For dessert, pumpkin pie was not yet a thing either. Although the Pilgrims liked pumpkins, they didn't have the butter and wheat flour needed to make pie crust. Instead, they hollowed out the pumpkins (just like Halloween!) and filled them with milk and honey to make a custard and then roasted them.

Although our Thanksgiving meals have changed over the years, it still is a fantastic time to get together and celebrate. In the spirit of evolving traditions, don't be afraid to innovate to add your own personal traditional twist to the holiday as well!



## The Power to Choose

Nourishing the Good Things in Life

Abraham Lincoln once said, *"The best way to predict the future is to create it."* That quote hangs on my office wall. I see it every day.

Over the last year and a half, we have lived with a persistent sense of uncertainty created by the pandemic and its fallout. With that in mind, I recently found myself staring at that quote and thinking, *"How, Mr. Lincoln, can I create my own future when life is so uncertain?"*

As I sat there, lost in my thoughts, I recalled this profound reflection by Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor:

*"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*

It's easy to feel like victims when we run into challenges and hardships in our lives. We put blame on other people or events. Why? I think it's our way of coping, of making sense out of overwhelming conditions. But what this attitude does is take away our personal responsibility, our personal choice. We are trying to feel more in control by blaming others, but the opposite happens because faulting others makes us dependent and powerless to create change on our own.

My thoughts are consistent with Frankl's: While you may not choose your circumstances, you still have control over how you react to those circumstances. Choosing a positive attitude will affect your life for the better in all areas, no matter what the situation. It's a mental outlook of optimism — of expecting good things to happen. If you view life, experiences, and

challenges with the confidence that they will work out in the best way possible, you will learn from each experience.

There's an old story of a Native American chief teaching his grandson about life. Maybe you've heard it, but it serves as an important reminder of the power we have over our own attitudes.

*"A fight is going on inside me,"* the chief said to the boy. *"It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil — he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."*

He continued, *"The other is good — he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you — and inside every other person, too."*

The grandson thought about it for a minute, then asked his grandfather, *"Which wolf will win?"*

His grandfather simply replied, *"The one you feed."*

By choosing a positive attitude and exercising our freedom of choice, we can decide which wolf we feed. So, sitting here, staring at Lincoln's quote, I feel grateful, and I feel thankful for all the good things in my life. I choose to feed the good wolf and create my own attitude and future. Which wolf will you feed?

*Glenn Matecun*



# Was Alexander the Great Buried ... Alive?!

## HISTORIANS DEBATE THE FATE OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT CONQUERORS

For centuries, the ancient Greeks ruled most of Europe and the world, and one man is credited with unifying this historically powerful mass of people under one rule for 13 years: Alexander the Great.

Alexander is most known for his hard-fought capture of land all across the globe after succeeding his father on the throne at just 20 years old. But Alexander's rise came crashing down when he died just 12 years later.

Today, the facts of his death are starting to piece together a curious puzzle for historians, because some now believe Alexander was buried alive.

Surprisingly (and terrifyingly), this wasn't uncommon. For centuries, doctors struggled to definitively prove someone was dead because

many of the classic signs of death are similar to those of someone in a comatose state. This became such a common problem into the 20th century that people were buried in specialty coffins or with a bell tied around their hand to alert grave watchers. (As bodies decomposed, you can imagine how this created eerie occurrences.)

Experts believe Alexander the Great may be one of history's first recorded instances of such a death. After 12 days of abdominal pain that led to a fever and paralysis, ancient Greek doctors couldn't detect a breath from their great ruler, and he was declared dead. As the massive empire mourned, Alexander's body was prepared for the afterlife, but he didn't show signs of decomposition for six days. This only fed the belief that Alexander — like other rulers of his time — was part god.

Dr. Katherine Hall of the University of Otago, New Zealand, believes this suggests that Alexander wasn't yet dead. In fact, he may have been suffering from a rare bacterial infection that attacks the nervous system and leads to paralysis, which could result in the lack of breath. As such, Dr. Hall believes he was entombed alive, making him one of the first to suffer a "false death."

However, other historians are quick to say Dr. Hall's theory is too speculative to be taken as fact. Among the common counter arguments, Dr. Hall's reliance on data and details collected centuries after his death can be troublesome.

We may not know exactly how Alexander died, but with Hall's theory, some of the final pieces of the puzzle may fall into (an eerie) place.

## 4 Tips to De-Stress During the Holiday Season

With the holidays here and the end of the year fast approaching, life can become a little more busy and fast-paced. Shopping, cooking, baking, cleaning, planning, and decorating on top of your daily responsibilities can be overwhelming. There are many methods to ease through the season and allow yourself to enjoy the festivities. Practicing mindfulness and stress management is the key to making your holidays brighter!

### Don't lose sight of the important things.

With long lines in the stores and horrible holiday traffic, it can be easy to forget the importance of the holiday season. Even in stressful situations, take the time to reflect on the meaningful things surrounding these next few months and how you can make the most of them. Letting little things get under your skin doesn't serve you well. Keep an open mind.

### Turn up the music.

It doesn't have to be holiday tunes, but listening to music has a profound impact on your mood and brain. It may be rock or something much calmer, such as classical or jazz, that soothes you and helps to declutter

your mind to get you through your day in a happier mood.

### Respond with warmth.

Kindness works wonders. Throughout the holiday season, you will encounter some people who are grumpy and frustrated. While you can't change how others act, you have control over how you respond. Take the time to go the extra mile to be nice — it will soften your frustration. The holidays can be lonely for some people, and extending compassion can help to give them (and you) a new perspective.

### Take breaks.

Even though there is much to get done, your mind and body need time to rest and recuperate. Checking out for 15 minutes is revitalizing and can help you to return to your task or work feeling refreshed and better equipped to get things done. It is important to be kind to yourself.

Finding the calm and charm of the holidays makes for a cheerful holiday season. Be sure to use these tips for a more relaxed and enjoyable time spent with family, friends, and loved ones.



## The Season of Thankfulness

This past year has certainly been a challenging one, and Thanksgiving may still look a little different this year than in years past. You may be hosting or attending a responsible and health-conscious gathering with your loved ones or celebrating virtually. However, gratitude is the attitude of Thanksgiving, and there is no better time than the present to express your appreciation and thankfulness.

With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season on our doorstep, it is important to take the time to express thanks for all of the blessings in our lives. There are many ways to let our loved ones know our appreciation and to give back.

### Spend time with loved ones.

We lead busy lives, and sometimes, we miss out on enough quality time spent with the ones who are important to us. This holiday season, be sure to carve out some time to relax with those you hold dear, engage in meaningful conversation, and let them know how much you appreciate their companionship.

### Volunteer in the community.

There are many ways in which we can chip in to better the lives of others. By volunteering your time toward a meaningful cause, you never know how many lives you will be able to touch in the process. You can help out at a local food pantry, hospital, or nursing home and brighten the day of many. Afterward, be sure to reflect on the experience — there are many things to be thankful for.

### Donate goods.

Gratitude takes on many forms. Sharing with others is a creative way to express your appreciation for all that you have. Do you have old clothes, shoes, toys, or other belongings collecting dust in your home? If so, local homeless shelters would be glad to take in the donation!

This Thanksgiving, don't miss out on spreading love and cheer while reflecting on all we have to be thankful for, despite the difficult circumstances in our lives.

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## Helpful Resources

- **Is your estate plan up to date?** Ask us about our FREE Estate Planning Check-up. Call our office or email Julie@mtolaw.com
- **Don't miss Glenn on "Senior Law Radio,"** WHMI FM 93.5 every Sunday at 8 a.m. You can also listen live (or to previous shows) on WHMI.com.
- **Questions about your money?** Do you need help with your financial goals, investment management, or retirement planning? Glenn has partnered with his personal financial advisor, Brad Jerome, to bring expert financial services to our clients. Brad meets with you right in our office — no cost, no obligation, and no pressure. Just an opportunity to discuss your goals with a top-notch financial advisor to see where your path might lead. You can reach Brad directly at 517.301.3070.
- **Let us be your trusted advisor for all your legal matters.** We have grown with the referrals we receive from our clients. We want to return the favor by helping you find a great attorney outside the field of estate planning, elder law, and probate. Our clients often call us in need of an attorney who focuses on personal injury, auto accidents, elder and nursing home abuse, workers' comp, Social Security disability, and many other areas. To get the best results, you need an experienced attorney to help. If you want a referral, call our office or email Julie@mtolaw.com. We are glad to help!



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