



Photo by Jacques Coughlin

An Expatriate's Thanksgiving, 1983

by Liane Hansen, Host *Weekend Edition*

My mom was surprised that Thanksgiving was not a holiday in England. I had called her earlier in the day and had to explain that the pilgrims left the country to stake their claim in the New World.

We had set up housekeeping in London that August. Our son was just over a month old, and our daughter was 2 and a half. Luckily, my husband, Neal Conan, had the day off because he worked for an American company (NPR) so we could plan the traditional Thanksgiving meal. Not as easy as it sounds.

First, turkeys are hard to find. Many in Europe consider them to be "trash" birds and not worthy of the table. I think the butcher had a few because there were so many Americans in our neighborhood. I grew up in New England, so there were dishes that had to be on the table. Potatoes, creamed onions for Neal, onion and sage stuffing, and pie were easy to find. Cranberry sauce was a different matter. There were variations on that theme in the shops, but not the cranberry sauce of my youth. There was only one place to find it – Fortnum and Masons. They kept a small "gourmet section," where homesick Americans could buy peanut butter, Cheerios and other fare. There were a few cans of the cranberry sauce tucked in the back of the shelves - \$6 a can – expensive, but in the words of the commercial, priceless.

Our family, as well as some American friends, gathered at the groaning board for the traditional feast. We talked about home, and the things we took for granted. I recommend all Americans spend time abroad because the perspective changes. Things are often easier to see from a distance.

After the meal, we gathered around the cassette deck to listen to a tape of *Prairie Home Companion*. For one day, we were back home. And I was thankful.