

A Political Thanksgiving

By Ken Rudin, NPR Political Editor, writer of the weekly "Political Junkie" column on npr.org, and owner of an enormous campaign button collection

I'm sitting here, trying to chill after months and months of hectic preparation for the 2006 election cycle. All I kept thinking about, once Election Day came and went, was lying on my hammock in my back yard – until I realized I don't have a hammock. Nonetheless, I was envisioning taking a nap for, say, three months.

But I realized that I can't take that nap, that the 2008 presidential election is now already upon us. So I can't get out of this campaign mode/mood, even if I wanted to.

Then the request came in: KGOU wanted some "Thanksgiving Thoughts," either about favorite food or recipes or Thanksgiving tradition that I could share.

How can I talk about food, or Thanksgiving, I said, when all I can think about is the elections and the beginning of the next campaign cycle? Ken, they said, certainly you could take five minutes out and write something about this important tradition. "Surely you can talk about food without reverting back to politics."

So here goes. I'll do my best to keep politics out of this. After all, it *is* Thanksgiving.

Our family has always gotten together for the holiday, no matter where we are, and it's a special occasion. It's an opportunity to be with the ones with love, share stories, and have a special meal together.

The turkey, of course, is the most time-consuming part of the meal. But there's so much more to Thanksgiving than just turkey. It's the side dishes. While most people seem to prefer potatoes, I personally like rice. It doesn't matter if it's steamed or fried. I guess the reason is that ... is that ...



I wonder if Condoleezza Rice would really run for president in 2008. The war is not going well, but she would be an interesting choice, and it might shake up the status quo. She's never run for office before, but maybe that's what voters are looking for. Does McCain have the nomination locked up? Condi Rice would be an intriguing candidate, if nothing else.

I'm sorry, where was I? Right. I do know that next to the turkey, everyone's favorite side dish are the potatoes. Some bring sweet potatoes, but my sister always liked mashed potatoes, and ... and



That reminds me of the 1978 campaign for governor of Oklahoma. I always thought that Jerry Mash, an Oklahoma City attorney, really was going to be a factor in the Republican primary, having spent all that money. One of the reasons that ...

Sorry, sorry, sorry. I got distracted. Thanksgiving. We always had this weird uncle who didn't like turkey, or meat. He was more of a fish person. I used to say, "Uncle Lester, how can you eat fish during a ..."



I'll never forget the House Judiciary Committee hearings on Watergate in 1974. One of the leading Republicans on the committee was Hamilton Fish of New York. Did you know that in the 1968 GOP primary, he defeated a guy by the name of G. Gordon Liddy? I'm not kidding! Boy, how's that for ...

Oops. Back to Thanksgiving. Usually we are so stuffed after the meal, but then my Aunt Rae would always bring out an assortment of pies. My favorite was ...



I never knew what the Pat Buchanan people were thinking when they ran him as a "Reform Party" candidate during the 2000 election and claimed he was "electable." Anyone who knows the history of third-party candidates knows that ...

Jeez, this is getting out of hand. Oh yes, pies. Aunt Rae had these great ones to choose from. Apple was one of my ... my ...



I really thought Democrat Brent Appel had a shot when he ran in Iowa's Second Congressional District in 1982. The economy wasn't doing too well in the Midwest, but the Republican candidate had a very ...

I've got to stop this. Back to pies. Cherry was always ...



I always knew that South Dakota was a Republican state, but isn't it fascinating that U.S.G. Cherry, the Democratic nominee for the Senate back in 1920, finished THIRD in the general election!! How many people know that? Of course, when George McGovern came into the scene, the Democrats ...

I'm sorry. I can't do this. I can't think of anything other than politics. You'll have to get someone else. But please let me wish the folks at KGOU, and their listeners, the happiest of Thanksgivings.