

COMMENTARY

David McGrath: I give thanks for these fine Americans

By David McGrath
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(skynesher/Getty Images)

Is anyone surprised that at least [one poll this year](#), by statistics database Statista, found that Americans' favorite holiday is Thanksgiving? Expressing thanks, after all, makes everyone feel good.

In fact, numerous studies have shown that gratitude can lower blood pressure **by as much as 16%**, an even greater reduction than the 10% derived from petting a dog.

So, in the interests of promoting social harmony, as well as prolonging your life, consider sitting down after the holiday feast and using your right hand to write a Top 10 list of people and things for which you are grateful while petting your beloved pup with your left.

Here are my Top 10:



Engineer Martin Cooper holds a contemporary copy of the original cellphone in Del Mar, California, on March 20,

2023, which he used to make the first cellphone call on April 3, 1973. (Valerie Macon/Getty-AFP)

- **Martin Cooper**, our own Chicago-born engineer who from 1972 to 1973 invented the mobile phone, a descendant of which I'm using to make this list. Little did Cooper know (or maybe he did) how he would change the world.



Dolores Deasy in a faculty portrait for the 1989

Chicago Vocational High School yearbook.

(Classmates.com Yearbook Archives)

- **Dolores Deasy**, a former colleague and guidance counselor at Chicago Vocational High School, who used her connections to get me an interview for a job as an adjunct English instructor. That job eventually got me to *heaven*, also known as the College of DuPage, where teachers are granted the pay and administrative support to explore, create and teach with optimal effectiveness in the most impactful profession in America.



Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis speaks in the Fulton County Government Center in Atlanta on Aug. 14, 2023. (John Bazemore/AP)

- **Fani Willis**, district attorney of Fulton County, Georgia; **Alvin Bragg**, Manhattan district attorney;

and **Letitia James**, New York state attorney general, three intrepid civil servants who have withstood threats and racist harassment in order to seek justice, accountability and the preservation of democracy for the American people in two state criminal cases and one state civil case against Donald Trump.



H.E.R. preforms at the Walmart Heroes and Headliners concert at the MIDFLORIDA Credit Union Amphitheatre on Nov. 11, 2023, in Tampa, Florida. (Casey Brooke/Invision)

- **H.E.R.**, the dynamic singer-songwriter whose performance of the national anthem this year was the undisputed highlight of the lowest-rated TV broadcast of the World Series in history, a competition that was won, mercifully, in just five

games by the Texas Rangers. Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson, a Grammy- and Academy Award-winning artist, christened herself with the pronoun, the better, she believes, to focus on the music, which is attracting more and more attention because of her 50,000-watt voice and intricately smooth guitar playing.



WGN-AM 720 in Chicago on May 17, 2022. (Antonio Perez / Chicago Tribune)

- **WGN Radio**, my hometown’s century-old AM radio station, for pioneering the soap opera by broadcasting in 1930 the first installment of “Painted Dreams,” a daytime serial about the trials and tribulations of a large Irish American family. Since the sponsors were makers of detergent, the show, along with others that it spawned, became known as

the soaps, which filled the daytime hours for many Americans, including yours truly. “General Hospital” and “One Life to Live” provided the necessary relief and distraction I needed between college classes.



Neil Young performs at the Farm Aid music festival at the Ruoff Music Center on Sept. 23, 2023, in Noblesville, Indiana. (Suzanne Cordeiro/AFP via Getty Images)

• **Neil Young**, musical genius and anti-war, anti-racist environmentalist, who pulled his songs off Spotify and won't restore them until the digital music and podcast service stops broadcasting “The Joe Rogan Experience,” whose propagation of lies about COVID-19 vaccinations potentially endangered the health and lives of countless innocent people.



Former Chicago Bears defensive lineman Chris Zorich in 2018. (José M. Osorio/Chicago Tribune)

- **Chris Zorich**, long before he became a celebrated All-American at the University of Notre Dame and a defensive tackle with the Chicago Bears, was a role model in my sophomore English class at Chicago Vocational High School in 1985. His curiosity and interest in literature, particularly poetry, inspired his classmates to adopt the same serious attitude toward education that he had.



Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar talks to reporters in San Antonio, Texas, on July 1, 2022. (Sam Owens/The San Antonio Express-News)

- **Sheriff Javier Salazar** of Bexar County, Texas, for recommending that unlawful restraint charges be filed in connection with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' efforts to deceive and prey upon innocent migrants and surreptitiously fly them from Texas to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, all just to score political points.



Walter "Wally" Joslyn with his grandson Connor Szopko in 2022. (Walter Joslyn)

• **Wally Joslyn**, Vietnam War veteran, retired Illinois Bell executive and a buddy for 50 years, who in addition to cherishing his friends, his

grandchildren and big band music, is a steady, decent and temperate history buff and who, in a rapidly changing technological world, reliably reminds me to see the forest for the trees.



WGN chief meteorologist Tom Skilling at his home office on April 10, 2020. (John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune)

• **Tom Skilling**, legendary WGN meteorologist, for covering the city’s notoriously unpredictable blizzards, tornadoes and heat waves for the past 45 years, and for proving that nice guys can finish first in the living rooms and the hearts of Chicagoans. A workaholic who’s been teaching us about the forces of nature, [Skilling plans to take a “busman’s retirement,”](#) splitting time among Chicago, Hawaii and Alaska, whose weather patterns he will monitor

and research to satisfy his curiosity and maximize his joy!

Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

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