

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 20, 2006

Thanksgiving 1942 in Boston: Although we usually met with my father's family on Thanksgiving, for some reason these occasions did not make a lasting impression as did Christmas, when we gathered with my mother's family at one of three locations. Perhaps it was because I saw my paternal cousins weekly if not more often.

In 1942, at the beginning of World War II, my last Thanksgiving as a civilian was spent in Boston, where I was living at 329 Commonwealth Avenue with my roommate, Dick Mullikin. During that fall we usually had dinner at a Greek cafeteria called the Esplanade on Massachusetts Avenue about two blocks from our residence. Almost every night we ordered the fried scallop platter for 40 cents (the Greek almost threw it at us), but with a beverage and dessert, it wound up to be about 65 cents. I also remember a Chinese laundry nearby where the proprietor apologized for taking more than 24 hours to get our laundry back.

The government was trying to change the date of Thanksgiving from the traditional last Thursday in November to the next-to-last, but most people resisted. So, on the traditional Thanksgiving Day, Mullikin and I decided to splurge and have a real dinner with all the trimmings. We went to the restaurant in the Hotel Bradford on Tremont Street, where a full-course dinner was offered for \$1.75 plus the 5 percent Massachusetts old-age tax (charged on all meals \$1 and over). The following Saturday, November 28, 1942, Holy Cross beat Boston College 55-12, a real upset, in their annual football game, and in the evening hours, many were celebrating in the Coconut Grove Night Club. Dick Mullikin and I went to see *Mrs. Miniver* at a movie house on Huntington Avenue. When we came out, sirens were blasting and fire engines and ambulances were speeding eastward. The night club had caught fire. Before it was over, 491 patrons had lost their lives, including four brothers from Wilmington, Massachusetts, all in the Navy. It seemed to us that the ambulances ran on Commonwealth Avenue all that night until dawn. I apologize for such a morbid story.