This Thanksgiving I find myself thankful for so many things.

When I was younger I always imagined the mid-thirties as a boring time in life, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's an age when you really start discovering who you are.

I've found that there is more time in the day than I ever realized before as I've been forced to squeeze the most out of every day. Having a demanding job and a young family equals a lot of responsibility, but I've been blessed to have a job that I truly enjoy and a family that I love beyond measure.

I haven't done this in awhile, but I think it's worthwhile to reflect on the things we're thankful for. Here are some of the things on the top of my list:

n I'm thankful for all of the people in my life who helped shape me along the way. From my family, to my church family, to great teachers and those who taught me in my career, I have been blessed to encounter some great people in my life.

From a career standpoint, Mrs. Marie Downs was easily the most influential person who led me to writing. She was a talented English teacher, but the biggest thing was that she believed in me so much that I felt obligated to try to meet her expectations. I haven't had to write a term paper in nearly 20 years, but I still feel that way. Sometimes when I make a stupid mistake in the newspaper, I'm tempted to go steal Mrs. Downs' copy out of her mailbox.

When I came to The Yazoo Herald I had a lot of writing experience, but I was totally ignorant about the business side of a newspaper. I was very fortunate to work for Gary Andrews, who taught me those things and had the patience to teach them to a sometimes slow learner.

n I'm thankful that there are so many positive people in our community. Like any place, Yazoo has no shortage of people with negative attitudes who love to complain but rarely lift a finger to improve the things they're mad about.

Fortunately, there are more people who see the good things in Yazoo and are willing to work to make the most of those things. It wasn't that long ago that some of the people making major investments in downtown Yazoo City were regarded as crazy by some people who believed all hope was lost. Now those "crazy" people look like visionaries as new activity continues to appear on Main Street and more is on the horizon.

The same phenomenon is taking place on Fifteenth Street, where new life is appearing in once vacant buildings.

If these things can happen during a struggling economy, imagine what can happen when things improve.

And it will improve.
n I'm thankful that my father taught me to appreciate the outdoors. Whether it's hunting, fishing or just exploring, I find no greater peace than when I'm outside enjoying God's creation. I hope that my children will understand the value of turning off the cell phones and computers and experiencing nature.
I'm thankful that our four-year-old son seems to have been born with a love for these things. He provides me with an additional incentive to break away. Our little girl is already showing an interest in tagging along.
n I'm thankful that God gave me the ability to learn from my mistakes because I have made many. I've made a lot less since I met the girl who has now been my wife for five years. I'm certainly thankful for Jamie. My life has improved immensely since she came into the picture.
n I'm thankful to live in a free country, and for all of the brave men and women who have fought to keep it that way.
n I'm thankful for all of you who are reading this newspaper. Thanks to you I'm able to do what I love the most in the place I love the most. I appreciate each and every one of you.