

Promise of another new year

As we limped to the end of 2016, the promise of a new year arrived. The holiday is always a mix of nostalgia and optimism, as we look back on another year of getting older and look ahead to a fresh new beginning. Hanging a new calendar offers us the pleasing opportunity to start again with a blank slate.

2016 will not go down as the best of slates. It was marred by the most exhausting and debased presidential election in recent memory. It included the denouement of Syria's civil war — which showed us that inconceivable suffering can and does exist in the 21st century. That war and others in the Middle East contributed to a refugee crisis that spread across much of the world, testing governments, international charities and our own hearts. The year was also scarred by an almost continuous parade of dying cultural figures, from David Bowie to Carrie Fisher. Each one seemed slam the national bummer button harder than the last. And the U.S. government was a mess throughout — the Supreme Court spent a whole session with an even number of judges and Congress could barely be persuaded to pay the nation's bills.

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

Many of us were excited to see 2016 take its place in the rear view mirror.

But this New Year's Day was different than many in recent years. For some, their optimism is mixed with plenty of anxiety. A new U.S. president is among the top causes of worldwide heartburn, because he has shown himself to be a man not prone to respecting political or social mores. Perhaps there is a benefit to a new kind of politician, but there are real concerns about the continuity of the world order that have not been present since the Cold War. The first year of a Donald Trump presidency is bound to bring significant change, and change is scary. Lord knows it was for those who had to get used to Barack Obama.

Good things can happen in 2017. Growth and stability, promotions and awards and marriages and births. Yet sadly we know will see another war somewhere in the world, another genocide and another terrorist attack. There will be blood. There will be layoffs and divorces and deaths.

So much will be out of your hands in the next year, but much will be in them. Nothing changed on January 1 unless you did. So let's make this a year of personal responsibility, of personal charity and kindness. Let's do our best. Let's hold our leaders responsible for their actions, and to the same code of decency we teach at home. Let's make a resolution to be better than we were.

2017 has arrived. And perhaps the most painful and most comforting thought is that in the blink of an eye it will be over, and we'll be right back here talking about the coming of another new year.

—TT



Attack of the cluster flies

Happy New Year, Wallowa County. Should be an interesting one. Now let's talk about household pests. Cluster flies are not an affliction I've been saddled with at my own home, but I know people. These folks have dark rings under their eyes. Owners of cluster fly colonies speak in whispers. Their eyes dart around. You don't understand, they whisper. The cluster flies. These people never just say flies or house flies, it's always CLuster FLies. With a lot of emphasis on the first syllables. Sometimes spitting out the CLuster part.

If you haven't had the pleasure of getting acquainted with cluster flies, these creatures are notable for riding out the cold months by huddling next to Tyvek, sheetrock, insulation or inside any crack or crevice in houses, barns or structures where they manage to survive by drawing heat from the rage emitted by owners they have driven crazy. Cluster flies adhere to the safety-in-numbers approach. Great numbers. My first brush with cluster flies was working on a house remodel where part of the morning routine was



AND FURTHERMORE
Jon Rombach

vacuuming, sweeping or shoveling what seemed like whole cubic yards of fly carcasses from the window ledges and floors. The next morning it would be the same. We pulled siding from a wall and unearthed The Lost City of Cluster Flies. It really is startling.

This little nature lesson on cluster flies is just to set the scene for a recent Christmas party where I ended up next to a crackling woodstove talking with Chuck Fraser, the blacksmith. I'd buy tickets to hear Fraser discuss relative drying times for various paints. He's just that good of a storyteller. So when Fraser started in with, "I'll tell you, these cluster flies ..." I got comfortable, put my chin in my hand and settled in.

Before we get to Fraser's cluster flies, I want to throw in a quick note about heat

tape on plumbing. It sometimes quits on you. I can report this with absolute authority. Yeah, my heat tape went to a better place, peacefully and in its sleep, right when it was super-duper cold during one of those eleven-below-zero nights. The pipes froze in the kitchen, but, hey, no big deal, that's why they invented hair dryers. The very next morning one of the steel hinges on my woodstove door broke. Very poor timing. Again, no big deal as long as you have a nice neighbor with a welder. Thanks again, Gene. Frozen pipes, busted woodstove ... I'm not saying winter was beating me, but it did have me on the ropes just a tiny bit.

We now rejoin Fraser and his cluster flies. Chuck said he knew at least one good thing about real cold winters like this. When conditions are just right, with temps well below freezing and lots of sunlight outside, he cranks up the forge in his blacksmith shop until it gets a bazillion degrees inside. This sets the stage for what he calls Fraser's Revenge.

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County's winter a reason to read

During the blazing summer of 2013, I worked as a trail guide for the Tram, taking visitors around the top of Mt. Howard and telling stories about Wallowa County. One group of women from San Francisco, about my age, huffed and puffed along.

At one break, one woman asked me, "Where does everyone go in the winter?" "What do you mean?"

"Where does everyone go when they evacuate because of the snow?"

A picture of what this would look like flashed through my mind, and it was all I could do to keep a straight face.

"Well, we don't leave. We put on more clothes, make sure we have good tires, and we're good to go."

The five women stared at me in disbelief.

One exclaimed, "I could never do that."

I thought to myself, "You're probably right." But I said, "It's doable."

With two feet of snow outside my window, I buck up by repeating "This place is



WALLOWA GAL
Katherine Stickroth

not for sissies, that's for sure."

Yet winter in Wallowa County is more than dealing with snow. We build extra time for shopping at Safeway, because we're sure to run into someone we know which leads into an hour long conversation. Amid bananas and potatoes, with people walking around us, we catch up on any kind of news, grateful to see a different face, to hear a different voice.

And activities continue to draw people out of their snow burrows, such as Fish-trap's The Big Read event. This year's book selection, "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien is a work of fiction about Vietnam. Snowbound, I'm reading it now and quite frankly, I find there's a

lot of truth in his words. I've heard similar stories from my husband Richard and other Vietnam vets I've met over the years.

As a member of The Big Read committee, I appreciate the sensitivity I've seen by other members and find it remarkable that decades beyond the Vietnam conflict, the topic continues to raise emotional responses. What I enjoy about The Big Read is that with so many locals reading the same book, conversations are generated that might not take place otherwise.

"Where were you during Vietnam?" Some people were in combat there. Some were parents anxiously awaiting word from their sons. Some were wives, wondering if their husbands would make it home. Some were children, confused because their father didn't act the same as before he left. Some were hippies rebelling against The Establishment.

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Voters must heed wake-up call

The good news in Oregon for those of us who have grown weary of one-party control is that Republican Dennis Richardson will be our new Secretary of State for the next four years. The voters of Oregon also saw through the agenda of the public unions and defeated Measure 97. This measure would have made the people of Oregon \$6 billion poorer, added another 18,000 public union jobs and chased away 38,000 jobs from the private workforce (per an analysis done by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office.)

More good news at the state level is that Republicans picked up a Senate seat so there is no longer a Democrat supermajority in the Senate. The disappointing news is that the House Republicans did not add any members to their caucus and are still only one seat away from a su-



GUEST OPINION
Greg Barreto

per-minority just as we were in 2015-16.

Examples abound in poor policy that has been passed in the last two legislative sessions and then topped off by the elitist public union's introduction of Measure 97. The fallout that has ensued leaves Oregon's majority party unable to pay for the spending and poor investments they have created over the last 30 years. And they now blame their lack of management on the business community. A shortfall in revenue when revenue has

increased by \$3.1 billion since 2014 is hard to imagine. How about mismanaged government, shortsightedness, fiscal irresponsibility and payback to the public unions that contribute heavily to their campaigns?

Well, what's coming for 2017? A common-sense approach might be to look at serious reductions in spending and living within our means, but instead we are seeing is more tax proposals coming from the left. More proposed regulations and mandates for businesses including predictive scheduling and requiring companies' financial records to be made public.

Do you think that will bring good job creators to our doorstep? Me neither.

In real life, we wish a lot for things.

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Reader thankful Trump elected

Well, the election is over and the poor, pathetic, left wing major media and their favorite, left wing candidate, Hillary Clinton, went down to well deserved defeat.

It should have been obvious to anyone paying even the least attention that the Clinton's have left a trail of corruption in their wake. Also, during the campaign and before, Hillary seemed to have a real difficult time with something called the truth.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

The average Democrat voter, of course — as is also true with Republicans — tend to vote for and trust in their party, often because their parents, grandparents, all the way back to the dark ages did so. Not a good thing. Sadly if the only news me-

dia they were tuned in to were spewing out left wing propaganda they would tend to believe and go by what they were hearing rather than take time to research their candidate. Personally, I am thankful that Donald Trump, a non-politician, won and is picking an outstanding cabinet and taking aim at "draining the swamp."

Stormy Burns
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