

The 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 was and others in the Middle East contributed to a refugee crisis that spread across much of the world, which has tested 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 to slam the national bumper 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.

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

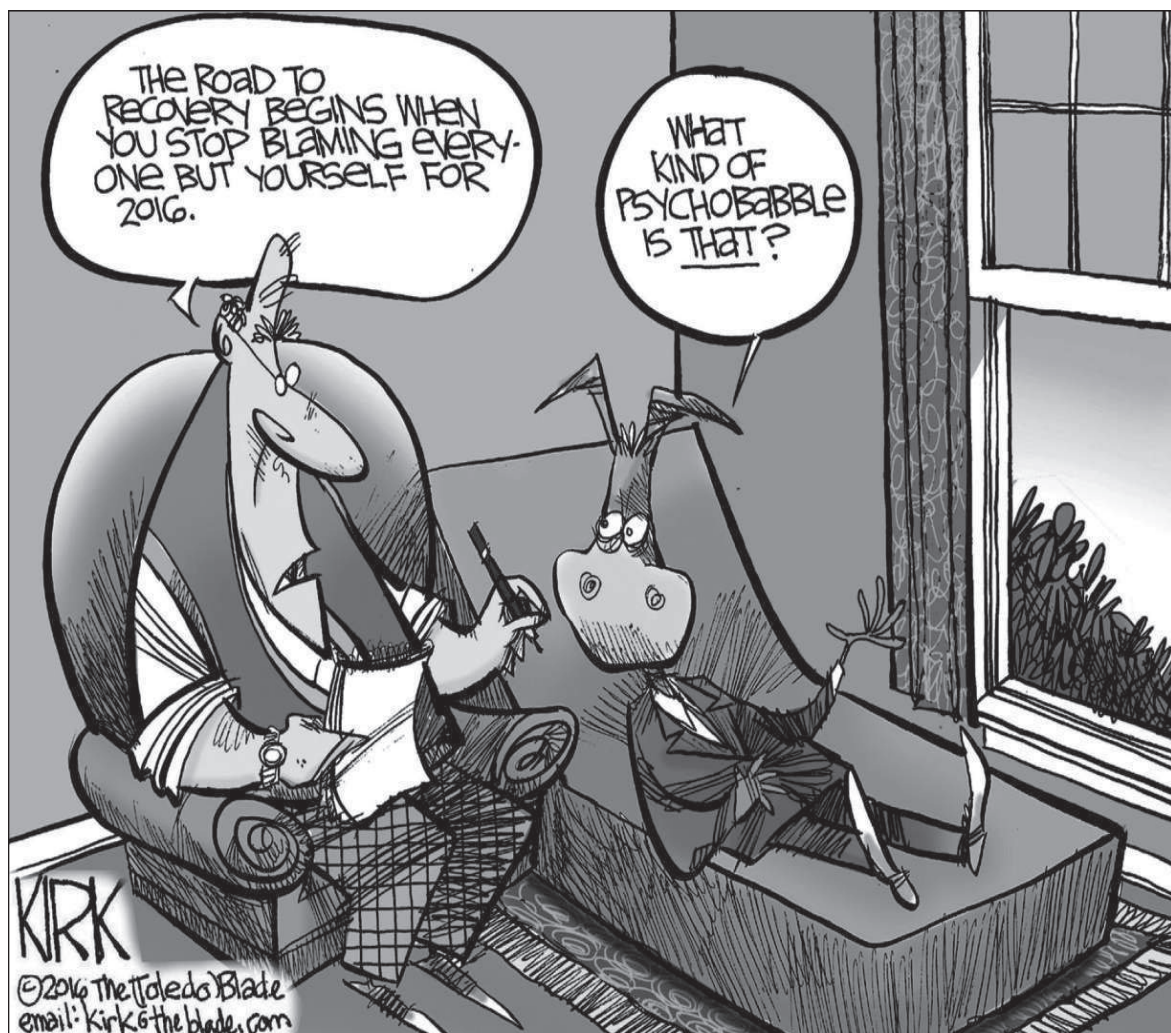
But this New Year's Day was different than most recent ones. For some, their optimism is mixed with plenty of anxiety. A new

U.S. president has many wondering what he will do, because he has shown himself to be unpredictable. Perhaps there is a benefit to a new kind of politician — most would agree something needs to change — but there are genuine 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 is here. 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.



FARMER'S FATE

Electronic sentiment

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

There we were surrounded by boxes of our "have-to-have its." Items that seemed we couldn't live without at the time, but now, with a new addition to the family, seemed to be taking up too much space.

We had agreed it was time to downsize to gain more room, and it seemed a task best accomplished together.

We had designated one area for Goodwill, another for junk and another for things we really couldn't live without. We stood back to back, ready to conquer our boxes of treasures and trinkets. We had decided to use the philosophy that if it wasn't useful or beautiful it had to go.

"Well, no better time than the present," my husband said, sliding a box over to me.

I sighed, and opened the lid. Photographs of my husband's ex-girlfriends fluttered onto the floor.

"Well," I laughed, "we can certainly toss this box out!"

My husband glared at me, and held up some of my old college textbooks.

"And while we're at it, these dusty books can go."

"Not my books! No one gets rid of books—books are always useful!"

I "rescue" my books, and he "saves" his exes, and we move on to the next set of boxes with just a little less enthusiasm.

"We can definitely get rid of all this dark room equipment," my husband says. "Look at all this

junk—I think you have more than 10 boxes of chemicals and supplies, not to mention these huge enlargers. Moving that out will free up the entire storage room!"

"But I love developing my own pictures," I protest. "It's both useful and beautiful."

"When was the last time you used any of this stuff? You went digital."

"Ya, well..." I was thinking hard.

"Maybe I could teach Keagan?" I suggested. "It'd be a great learning opportunity."

"Are you really trying to justify this junk with school?"

"School. Yes! An elective. It would be a great way to teach him about film and photography. I'm going to keep it. It's useful."

"Come on," he looked at me incredulously.

I set my chin determinedly — finally he shrugged.

"There are three enlargers. Can you at least pick just one?"

"Well," I said slowly, "maybe that one."

I pointed to the smallest of the three.

"Great!" he exclaimed, picking up the other two and heading toward the empty Goodwill area.

"No! No!" I shouted. "I meant we can get rid of the little one — I want to keep the big ones."

My husband wrinkled up his nose and gave me a look.

"You'll never use this stuff," he grumbled.

But his attention quickly shifted as I tossed a large chain full of keys into the discard box. He scrambled over to retrieve them.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "Do you know what these keys go to?"

"No," I said, "what?"

"Well I don't know," he answered, "but you shouldn't just throw them away without finding out. We might need one of them."

"They've been in this box since we got married — 12 years ago."

"Look," he said, "this one goes to my Trans-Am."

"You mean the Trans-Am you sold before we even met?" I asked.

He shot me a look, letting me know that keys to locks on vehicles more than a decade gone were more than just junk.

It went on this way for several hours. The area designated "have-to-have" was piled high with boxes, the junk box held a few holey socks and some old Christmas cards, and the Goodwill area had three backpacking books, the littlest of the photo enlargers, two empty key chains and an egg cooker.

The egg cooker was the only thing we were both happy to see go. Packing the one, lone Goodwill box out of the house, we both agreed that for future gifts, instead of more stuff, maybe we should just email or text pictures of things to each other — it would be electronic sentiment without the clutter.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A 'quieter federal land battle unfolds'

To the Editor:

A "quieter federal land battle unfolds." If you really look at what is unfolding, it's a battle for who speaks for local residents and how they use public resources.

Mr. Webb, executive director for the Forest Service-supported Blue Mountains Forest Partners (collaborative) worked hard to disband the forest commission. A commission that friends of Mr. Webb's sat on for years, and never once questioned the legitimacy of the commission.

Mr. Beverlin, supervisor for the Malheur National Forest, told forestry leaders that, if road closures were opposed, no harvest would

come off the forest, meaning "partners" of the "collaborative" would not see their \$70 million "Stewardship Contract" come to pass.

So, what were Mr. Webb and Mr. Beverlin to do? Could they sit back and watch "their" collaborative not be the sole "voice" on the Malheur National Forest? No. Could they sit back and watch people they supported for the commission lose in the primary and see their "influence" dwindle to nothing, as the forest commission could be used in Grant County directly "coordinating" on projects in the county? No.

They were left with only one course of action: disband the commission, steal the voice from the people of Grant County and remove the last effective tool the people

had to affect change on bad projects. This doesn't even mention Mr. Webb's growing influence and wage as the executive director of the collaborative that is in direct conflict with the commission.

Were Forest Service "collaboratives" formed to bring people together, or to control a message? Seems more to the latter anymore.

Do what the collaborative says, and you can proceed; go against the collaborative, and they send in their executive director to kill public participation.

Nice model you have, Mr. Webb and Mr. Beverlin. Maybe you should take in nationally. Oh, wait, it already is.

John D. George
Bates

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.

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