

TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo



Fire Rooster Year 4715

How we're going to do it

Election year 2016 is over. Now, new national and state and local governments are settling into place. Put another way: Monkey Year 4714 is finished and Rooster Year 4715 is here — a Fire Rooster Year, to be clear. One bound to be hot, tempestuous, spectacular.

I paused a long moment when I left the house today. Change was in our stilled and chilled morning air. But a moment or two later, our blessed sun rose, and along with her rose every urban and barnyard rooster on our grand continent's western edge. Each of them doing what roosters have always done. 2016 or 2017, 4714 or 4715, Monkey Year or Rooster Year, it's all the same to them.

These guys have gotten humans out of bed, gotten us brushed and dressed and breakfasted across time zones of every era, across zip codes of all geographies, no matter the day or the season. Roosters don't care whether it's an election year or not. They crow no matter who's in office. Or not.

Indeed, it doesn't matter so much whether your barnyard friends or your cozy household follows the Greek or Chinese calendar, the Egyptian or Mayan

one, the Persian or Hindu systems of clocking our precious sun's progress. It matters more to note how much so many of us, across our achy earth's well-worn face, want nothing more than to rise real early, to make a lot of money, and to return at workday's end to the people we love. To the people who love us.

2016's awfulness

I'm not saying that these times don't matter. No one would say that we haven't just endured the most exhausting Monkey Year in any grand auntie's memory. A long-long time. Because we did. We weathered 12 full months of the ugliest political theater. In daily bad acts. And because what happens here, in our immigrant nation, is inextricably linked to what's happening back home, our families have faced constant turmoil no matter which way we look.

Everywhere, 2016 was a year of sorrow and humiliation. The worst. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, 65.3 million children, parents, and elders no longer have a home to rise early in, to work hard for, to return to. In morning papers and online, on evening news and Facebook, Portland's Asian and islander,

African and Arab, Mexican, Latin American, and Russian-speaking households saw streams of people, their people, trudging away from awfulness. We saw Syrian baby boy Aylan Kurdi, our baby boy, washed up on shore. So alone.

We know 2016 has been turmoil unprecedented, both in raw scale of desperation, and for the enormity of wealth in the world watching these families suffer so.

Anxiety fills our River City homes. Fear is through the roof. As we approach Rooster Year 2017, many if not most of our newcomer and minority communities worry late into the night about what U.S. President-elect Donald J. Trump will do to them. To us. To a world of hurt no longer segregated by wide oceans. Our world.

Sometimes, often times, it seems no one knows where all this is going.

But you know, we do. We really do know where we're going. We know our families have been through exhausted days and awful nights before. Many times before. Many places before. We've simply risen every morning a moment after those reliable roosters, who rose a moment after our golden surija sun rose. We greet each other warmly. We wash our faces. We brush our teeth and hair. We went to work, and we did well through years much nastier than 2016 was, and even uglier than 2017 can be.

2017's goodness

The truth is, settled and new Americans are tough and tender. Our ancestors and elders, or you and me, had our hearts badly broken by leaving our families, by leaving our beloved homeland's soil and scents and whispering trees. Then our bones got broken by America — by the grim places we worked in her unkind economy, and by the daily battering of a mass culture so

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contrary to who and how we are. Still, in truth, we made it. We cried and laughed together, then we cried and laughed some more. We prayed a lot. Every day we did all that, reliable as roosters. We did good. We are good.

The operant word in and out of all that earlier awfulness, is *we*. We sorrow. We persist. We celebrate us. Surely, this is exactly how and why Rooster Year 4715 cannot do us any new harm.

We are a nation of stubborn immigrants. Ridiculously optimistic. Creative and kind. We know that if we're going to stay this way — no matter what kind of year we've just wrapped up and no matter what kind of new year is rolling in — we must stay true to us. True to how we are around our kitchen table; at this Friday mosque, this Saturday or Sunday temple or church; all over any crazy Costco, IKEA, or factory outlet mall.

More than who's in political office, we have always minded more *who* we rise so early with, who we work so hard for, who we come home to at the end of another exhausted workday, workweek, calendar year. We nurture us.

That is how we are. And we are good.

North Korea is a bad trip if you're looking to get high

Continued from page 4

Troy Collings, a frequent traveller to North Korea and managing director of Young Pioneer Tours, offered a more mundane explanation: It's just hemp.

Ditchweed. Nebraska no-high.

"I've seen and even purchased hemp, but it doesn't contain any THC and is just sold as a cheap substitute for tobacco," he told The AP in an e-mail. "It grows wild in the mountainous regions of the North and people pick it, dry it, and sell it in the markets, but it doesn't get you high no matter how much you smoke."

Hemp is grown in North Korea with official sanction. It's used to make consumer goods including towels, cooking oil, and noodles, as well as military uniforms and belts. It's also used as rabbit fodder. (Rabbits are grown for food.)

But industrial hemp is generally so low in THC, the active ingredient found in its cannabinoid cousins, sativa and indica, that it's useless for medicinal or recreational purposes. It's even cultivated in a different manner, focusing on male plants that do not produce buds. It's the buds of female plants that recreational users are most after.

The Pyongyang Hemp Processing Factory actively markets hemp products as "environmentally friendly" and "perfect for the 21st century." An official at the plant told The Associated Press that while several varieties of hemp grow in North Korea, all are very low in THC.



BAD TRIP. A saleswoman holds up a locally produced t-shirt made of hemp in Pyongyang, North Korea, which has been getting some pretty high praise lately from the stoner world. The claim that marijuana is legal in North Korea and that if any laws do exist, they aren't enforced, is emphatically not true, according to the North Korean penal code, which lists it as a controlled substance in the same category as cocaine and heroin. Hemp is, in fact, grown in North Korea with official sanction, but it's used to make cooking oil and military uniforms and belts. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E)

"No one smokes this in our country," she said, requesting she not be named because of the sensitive nature of talking to the American media. "It's only used for making things."

North Korea grows something else that might be confused with marijuana: a mix of brown and greenish leafy tobacco that is used in pipes and sold openly in Pyongyang and elsewhere.

Smoking a lot of that could certainly give someone a buzz — and probably a bad headache. But from the nicotine.

Nevertheless, Simon Cockerell, general manager of Koryo Tours,

another agency that specializes in bringing foreign tourists to the North, said the idea that marijuana is legal in North Korea has become so widespread that it's not uncommon for prospective tourists to ask what to expect.

"We apologize, but have to inform those enquiring about this that weed is not legal. They are not going to be able to get any there," he said.

"The idea that the country is full of stoners blissfully getting high in a legal-weed paradise is not an accurate one," he added. "Not having seen or done something doesn't mean it is never seen or done, of course. But I have never seen this."



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		3	7	8				1
1	7				9			5
		8			3			
7	9							
			6	1				
							6	9
		1			5			
3		8					9	2
6			5	7	3			

Difficulty level: Medium #37811

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #58452 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

9	5	3	6	2	8	4	1	7
8	7	4	1	3	5	2	9	6
1	2	6	4	7	9	5	3	8
6	3	8	7	5	4	9	2	1
4	1	5	8	9	2	6	7	3
7	9	2	3	6	1	8	5	4
3	4	9	2	1	6	7	8	5
2	8	1	5	4	7	3	6	9
5	6	7	9	8	3	1	4	2

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