



Happy New Year!

All right.. I'll try, if you'll try, too. Some of you apparently feel I ought always to be optimistic and never let cynicism creep into my publicly-expressed views.

Although it's not easy to do, it would be easier to remain optimistic if you'd help. If you will, you won't be helping just one person -- you'll be helping thousands -- and yourself included!

You can join the forty per cent of Barnstable's registered voters who bother to go to the polls on election day.

You can make a real effort and exert yourself enough to find out what officials are doing (or not doing) for you and the rest of the town in their elective capacity, and base your voting decisions about them and their qualifications to serve upon an informed viewpoint instead of voting for "a nice person".

You can share the responsibility to recycle waste products with the three per cent of Barnstable's population who are trying to reduce costs of running our town, our state, our nation.

You can bring waste metals, paper and glass to the recycling center at the disposal area. At home, you can build a compost pile and recycle most of your garbage to improve your soil.

You can support these efforts by setting an example, by talking about the benefits with your friends and neighbors, and by encouraging others to participate.

You can continue to conserve energy resources by keeping your car in good condition, having it tuned regularly and keeping your speed down; by setting your thermostat lower during cold weather and wearing warmer clothing to be comfortable.

You can help conserve energy by turning off unnecessary lights, by shutting off electrical appliances as soon as you're through using them, by setting up a woodburning stove to supplement your oil, gas or electric heat.

You can use the compost you make over the winter to sweeten your garden soil this spring. If you'll set out some tomatoe, pepper and cucumber plants in June, you can enjoy harvesting your own vegetables.

You can participate in local government by running for Town Meeting Representative. If you'll do this -- and become active in serving your fellow-voters -- the decisions made at Town Meeting will more fairly represent those of all. And the same one per cent of the voters who've been serving in this capacity won't be carrying all the blame for the rising tax rates.

You can take an active interest in what our schools are doing with the children who will, in the next ten years, become members of our adult community.

If you know what they are taught and why, what's no longer considered worth teaching and why, what values are emphasized and which ignored, your voice can influence the curricula; you can also concentrate on those values you want your children to learn -- values the school may no longer view as necessary.

You can take a firm position regarding discipline, in schools and out, to which people must conform. If certain standards of behavior are required and admired, children (and most adults) will adopt those standards as their own.

You can set an example for children and other adults by behaving yourself as you would like them to behave. You can be honest -- in the home, in the community, in business -- with every individual and every entity.

You can set an example by practicing the Golden Rule. If you conduct yourself when dealing with others as you wish they would deal with you, your peers and your children will follow in your footsteps.

If you look for ways to beat the system, take advantage of other people whenever you can, duck responsibilities at every chance, you can't be too surprised if your children -- and your neighbors who look to you as a pace-setter -- follow suit.

You can set an example by obeying the law whether a policeman is

watching you or not. If you cheat on your income tax, if you keep the change someone gives you when you know it's more than you should have received, if you lie and bear false witness, your children -- and your friends -- will know it. They will do likewise; if you do it, it must be all right.

You can be kind. When discussing people less fortunate than yourself, you can express understanding and empathy as well as respect for the good things they are and do.

You can be thoughtful, say "please" when you make a request and "thank you" when someone does something for you. You can speak gently to your children and to people who look up to you, even when reprimanding them. If you yell and scream at them, they will yell and scream at others.

You can teach your children the ways of happiness and joy by living your own life in a happy and joyful way. By pointing out the beauty of the world around us, you can enrich the lives of those you live with and instill in them an appreciation of their surroundings.

If the sunset is colorful, take time to watch it flare, flame and fade. If moonlight on the water twinkles and beams, sit still and watch it with a child.

When wildflowers bloom, show someone else. Teach him to see beauty in what may be nothing more than a weed. If a bird builds a nest where you can watch the eggs hatching, share it.

If your family enjoys a pet, show by your example how to train an animal. Treat it gently, speak your praise aloud, demonstrate your affection, be consistent in your expectations. Give your pet and your children the time and attention they deserve.

You can do these things without spending one extra penny of your hard-earned money. If you'll do these things you'll enjoy your own life a great deal more.

Your family will like being with you and will always remember you as a fine honest generous person; the kind of person they will want to be as well.

If you'll do these things, you'll be beloved by all who know you. If you'll do these things, you'll be happier and the level of your own self-respect will climb. The esteem in which you're held in the community will be high. All who know you will speak well of you.

You can have a happy new year. And I can have a happy new year, if you will. But I can't have a happy new year unless you do, too, because my life in the coming year will be inextricably interwoven with yours, and what you do will affect me, just as what I do -- in some ways -- will affect you.

Whether we can look back on 1976 as a happy year depends, to a larger extent than any of us usually stops to realize, upon how we all behave during the coming twelve months.

I resolve to try to do my part to make it a happy year.

Won't you please resolve to try to do yours?