

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Didn't we have a glorious fall? It's almost as though we were being compensated for the rough time Old Man Winter visited upon us the last few years. Maybe this year we'll have an open winter. It sometimes happens that way on Cape Cod but there's no way to predict accurately the weather awaiting us in January, February and March.

Nor is there any way to predict what other surprises are in store for 1979. Whenever a new year rolls around, people gladly let the old one slip away. It had its joys and sorrows. There were moments of laughter and moments of tears, of amusement and of solemnity, of contentment and frustration.

And so it is with nature. Some of the bulbs tucked tenderly into the earth the preceding all pushed green sprouts through the ground's surface almost before all the snows melted; others never developed at all. Some of the green sprouts produced gay blossoms; some ran only to foliage.

Some broadleaved evergreens survived the winter and burst into glorious bloom in May; others were killed by prolonged frosts and icy blasts; those that died had to be cut out at spring clean-up time.

Certain hardy rose bushes made it; others needed replacement. Our summer flower gardens brightened with annuals and perennials; our vegetable gardens flourished. Alongside the plants we cherished grew the weeds.

And when the lawns turned green, some showed damage from snow mold or cinch bugs while tougher grasses wintered over without trouble.

Fall harvests were good, or fair, or poor. Fruit crops were heavy, middlin' or sparse.

And so it is with us and our more complicated lives. Some of us look back at the year just gone, sigh with relief, and look forward with hope to 1979 because it can only be a better way. Others of us let the old year fade into memory with a small tug of regret for it's been a fine year, one of accomplishment and satisfaction. Even so, we look ahead with anticipation: this year that's so new holds promise of even greater successes.

No one dreads the coming year when January blows in;

hope really does spring eternal.

The very young see the twelve months of the future stretch interminably ahead. They're impatient for breaks in daily routine. School holidays and summer's long vacation seem so distant that youngsters feel their times may never come. Each day is greeted with enthusiasm and hope.

Young adults savor the days, fill them with productivity and action; their weekends are crammed with social engagements and entertainment; work-a-day routines stimulate and challenge. Time marches with precision, goals are set and achieved, now goals take their places. As hopes are realized, new ones loom.

The middle aged see the seasons pass quickly; their aims are set on the future too. Retirement plans are made, for within sight are days of unstructured relaxation, days to putter, days to travel, days to be busy or lazy as the spirit moves. That is the hope and the dream spurring each one on to complete the years of work and labor.

And the aged, too, still have hopes. If they are lonely, they hope for companionship. If they are sick, they hope for a respite from pain and illness. If they are poor, they hope for solutions to their financial difficulties. And time passes with astonishing speed. Days, weeks, months, and years seem to merge.

Rich in memory and experience, they draw on these resources when physical ones have begun to fail. These, yes, these and their hopes.

And so it is throughout the world, at all levels of life. The newborn come into possession of life impatient, squalling for instant gratification of their needs and wants, snatching and sucking for sustenance, where a human life, whether a tulip bulb, whether the fledgling bird, whether the fry of the fishes in the sea.

The adolescent struggles to maturity, sometimes knocking gently at the doors of adulthood, sometimes crashing through the portals before fully prepared. Witness the butterfly bursting its chrysalis, then resting while its fragile wings unfurl, dry and grow strong. Witness the teenager applying for a first full-time job or setting out for college.

The fully-grown at first may slip back on occasion to the safety and protection of childhood; but soon they stand alone, capable of independence, full of their own determination to sustain themselves. They mate, reproduce their own kind, raise their young and prepare them, in turn, for their own flights into a future yet unknown.

And, like faded oak leaves throughout the winter clinging to twigs, to the past, the aged are symbols of hope exactly as spring bulbs swell with promise lying dormant beneath winter's snowblanketed gardens. From those who have traveled the long road of life have sprung the generations who are now in full flower and optimistically grasp at the future.

There's nothing remarkable about the dawning day we call January first; it's a day like all other days, like the millions of days preceding it, the millions to follow. What gives this day special significance is our own attitudes, our dreams, our anticipations, our optimism, our hopes.

And if Old Man Winter and Mother Nature conspire to give us mild weather for the next few months, if they subject us to another fierce season of snow and ice, frigid winds and bitter cold, hope for an early spring will carry us through to April and the start of another season, full of promise.

Happy New Year to all, and may 1979 bring you the realization of all your hopes.