

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Sometimes it's entertaining to impose upon places or periods of time some of the characteristics of individuals. We do this, of course, when we depict the final hours of the year as an old man carrying a scythe and welcome a new year as a cherubic baby.

If we were to assess the year 1976 as a woman, we could say she's been a respectable one, til now. The lovely girl of June has reached maturity; as of Labor Day she's about to turn the corner and embark on that middle-aged spree characteristic of the "Life Begins at Forty" crowd.

Up 'til now, 1976 has conducted herself with admirable restraint, a restraint that may have misled us.

Up 'til now, in spite of temptations to indulge in excesses and call unseemly attention to herself, 1976 has been decorous. Even her birthday celebrations have been tasteful and unmarked by boisterous — or worse, riotous — celebrations.

Had the Bicentennial occurred during the tempestuous '60s, I tremble to think what might have become of our ingenuous young lady, hardly out of short dresses, only recently with her hair up.

Leveler heads than hers might have been turned had the nation's birthday come but a few short years sooner.

Now, of course, 1976 is old enough to make decisions for herself. With sophistication of experience, tempered with intelligence and touched with time, she enters her prime.

Flinging over her shoulders flamboyant scarves, brilliant enough to put light and flash to the sky, the sea, the darkest corner of her world, she comes.

She comes in a swarm of sun-drenched days and a flock of moon-kissed nights. She comes with ponds holding their breaths while the bending hills admire their own reflections.

She may be noisy; she may yell and scream color at us and we may hear her music. She may show blood-reds, gold slashes, and we may ache with her pain.

She may scream with wind, rip and rattle everything that's loose or can be torn loose and throw it about, drive the seas over the land, drown the whole with drenching rains.

She's done it before.

Her wild oats will soon be sown, her candle guttering. We'll see her at the end: sad, sombre, bent, stiffening with hardening joints and arteries, all ardor and excesses cooled.

By late December she'll smile briefly, wear regally a jewelled crown upon her snowwhite head, spread sparking light-filled gems, like rings, upon her gnarled fingers, tie perky ribbons and bows under her chin.

A week later, she'll be dead.

That's how we might view a year, this year, if we endowed it with characteristics of a living woman.

If we attribute similar characteristics to a place, how might we describe a village, a village like Hyannis?

We could look back and remember Hyannis as child-like, wide-eyed, naive, trusting; we could see her formless undeveloped frame, her open-hearted welcome to strangers, her ultimate fall, her betrayal, her rape.

"To better admire you, little Hyannis, we must get rid of these old clothes you're wearing." Down came her trees and her fine old houses.

"To show you at your finest, lovely Hyannis, climb into these fancy duds." Up went the shops and the store fronts.

Trees, houses with swings and rockers on broad porches, shady lawns, green hedges, white picket fences, all fell before the blade of the bulldozers. In their places came concrete and macadam, plate glass and plastic, brick, steel and aluminum.