

VILLAGE VIEW

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Almost all things, when new, hold special meaning for us, and we all begin each new year with hope for better days to come. The old year now is history and the unsullied future lies before us, full of promise, full of hope.

If it were as easy to cast off all old things as it is to start a new year, life would be simpler. If we could shrug off bad habits and pull on good ones, like a pair of new boots, we and the whole world would benefit.

If we could even bring ourselves to consign to the trash-can such things as not-quite-worn-out slacks, slippers and sweaters when we replace them, we'd eliminate a lot of clutter. Old clothes, though, feel good to us, and even if they're no longer modish, even though no longer presentable enough to wear in public, "It's good enough for around the house, to work in, to garden in," keeps them in our closets.

An old coat? "It's still warm," we say, as we look ruefully at threadbare cuffs and hang it back in the corner. Old shoes? "Still good for stormy days," we tell ourselves. Old gloves? "Okay for shovelling snow," we think, and tuck them back in the drawer.

When it's time to trade cars, who among us doesn't delight in the new-car smell, the tight steering apparatus, the smooth ride, the unmarked mirror-like sheen of new paint and polished chrome? Yet who among us walks away from the old crate without a passing thought of the good trips it carried us on, its reliability, and the happy hours we've spent inside its protective shell? It shielded us through wind, rain and snow; it took the damage instead of us when involved in a minor accident. The dimpled fender, the bent bumper, the streak of rust on its door attest to that. We walk away and drive off in our new car, but not without a twinge of affection for the old heap.

New houses are exciting, but in the ones we leave behind remains a vestige of ourselves. Inside those walls we lived and worked, we laughed and cried, we sang and we complained. We cooked, ate and slept; we were sick and recovered; we entertained family and friends; and we returned home to it from the outside world day after day. We don't leave a lived-in house without a pang.

A new school is a challenge for there we make new friends, acquire new knowledge, grow and achieve. But who leaves an old school without feeling loss? The familiar buildings, rooms, corridors and routines mean security, and only with time and experience will we fit a slot in a new school.

Moving to a new community or a new job promises great opportunity, but leaving the old is a wrench. Good neighbors, a circle of friends, the people at the bank, grocery store, service station and in all the shops call us by name and greet us with friendly smiles. In a new town, we're strangers, at least for a while. Co-workers at a new job are unknown to us; their personality quirks must be discerned and accepted, threads of office politics must be unravelled and understood, and whatever our assignments, they will differ in some ways from the

job we en.

Newness is change, challenge and chance. And adjustment to the new demands hope, faith and confidence.

As the old year passes and becomes no more than memory, we hang up a new calendar in the old one's place, a symbolic act of beginning again; figuratively, we hitch up our trousers, putting the joys and sorrows of last year behind us.

The new decade begins, the next-to-the-last of the Twentieth Century. It didn't begin a year ago. It starts now. The first decade began with the first year and ended at the conclusion of the tenth. We, therefore, begin the decade of the '80s with this new year.

And what will it hold? Challenge? Assuredly, for there's much to be accomplished. Change? Unquestionably, for we must change to meet successfully the situations confronting us. Chance? Yes. Our very lives lie in the lap of chance.

By chance, we might have been victims of accident or natural disaster last year or in any year of our lives before then. And by chance we may be victims in the year to come. By chance we might have won the lottery, been singled out for recognition, met the love-of-our-life, or invented a better mousetrap.

By chance it may be one of us, and it could be you, who's the patient to benefit from a new medical breakthrough. It could be you who finds a new comet in the sky, who discovers a way to run a motor on non-petroleum products, who suggests a better solution to dispute than war. It could be you who solves the inflation problem or sees a way to put the unemployed back to work. It could be you, by chance, who makes a remarkable contribution to the welfare of mankind on this planet.

Someone, sometime, somewhere discovered the wheel. Someone found glass could be made from sand. Someone invented the gasoline engine. Someone built the first aircraft, designed the safety pin, developed plastic, conceived the computer chip.

Someone spoke the first word, sang the first musical notes, drew the first picture, wrote the first poem.

Hope made those things happen. No one without hope ever saw possibility. No inventor was hopeless. No creative person entirely gave up hoping for success even in the face of overwhelming odds.

That's what a new year instills in us. Hopefulness. A chance to be better, to reach goals, to start fresh. A chance to do things right. A chance to win the race, the game, the prize. A chance to make amends and forgive, to learn and grow, to love and be loved. A chance to be happy.

Behind our greetings as this new year opens lies hope. Happy-New Year!

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