

VILLAGE VIEW

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A new Year, a new decade... it's hard not to wonder what's ahead. For all the uncertainty, some assumptions can be made without fear time will prove them wrong.

The decade of the 1980's will bring to some of us prosperity; to others, poverty; there will be periods of peace in some parts of the world and times of war in others. There will be much joy and rejoicing. There will be much suffering and sorrow.

To many the coming decade will mean life itself; millions of new lives will begin before 1990 rolls around. For the youngest now among us, the '80's will be a period of learning; learning to talk and walk, to dress and feed themselves, to read and write, to say please and thank you, to get along with parents, siblings, peers.

For youngsters approaching or already into their teens, the new year will bring feelings of strong attraction to the opposite sex, achievement as they complete public school and enter college or get jobs. Some will marry and become parents by 1990.

These are years of big change for the young, years that mold and shape them and their futures to a greater extent than any others they will ever again experience. The child born this year will turn twenty-one in the Twenty-First century.

Older people are often dismayed at the prospect presented by the future; older generations worry about ways younger ones will contend with life. With age, it's easy to forget or never to consider how much young people put behind them in the first two decades of their lives. The young are unaware they never again will change as much, in all their days, as during childhood. They've no way of knowing the future will not ask of them the same degree of growth demanded by those years they've just completed. And they've still energy enough to feel they'll always have energy in abundance.

For the young adult group, the next ten years will be a settling-down time, a period when dreams are sifted from reality, years when the impossibility of some aspirations is accepted, when limits of the achievable are recognized, and when challenges are met with confidence and reason.

Most of an older group will enter the last stage of their lives in which real growth and progress will be realized. And those but a short decade senior to them will have arrived at their peaks of performance; for most of these, it can be truly said, "It's all downhill from here."

Downhill, of course, can take equally as long and be equally as rewarding a journey as was the trip to the top. The seeking and striving is finished; at this point in their lives, people know their capacities and limitations. They've won enough battles and lost enough skirmishes to assess fairly their strengths and weaknesses. They've reached an equilibrium between themselves and their perceived world.

Given a bit of good fortune and healthy minds and bodies, they can coast for a while, let younger people pull and tug and haul. Their days of fighting tooth and nail for survival are

fading into oblivion.

Ahead lie calmer waters, gentler days, quieter nights, time for relaxing; now the reins are tossed to younger people waiting eagerly to snatch them up. This time of life may be welcomed or dreaded, but most those now experiencing it seem filled with contentment and satisfaction lacking among the more youthful.

For some the coming decade will bring finality; there will come a day when they do not wake to this world, but to another dimension. At first, they'll be mourned; then, greatly missed, always they'll be remembered. They will be at peace as never before, for death is as much a part of life as birth.

These things we can be certain will come to pass during the 1980's. It has always been so and, as long as mankind exists on earth, it will continue to be so.

As we enter the new decade, there are less certain aspects of the future. What changes will come within our neighborhoods, our towns and cities, our states and nations? Shall we be successful in maintaining the uneasy peace of the past few years? Will our country be plunged into another deadly conflict?

Shall we in the United States have conquered our glutinous appetite for fossil fuels by 1990? Will our cars all be electric powered by solar-charged batteries? Will utilities be providing solar-generated electricity? Will the air we breathe and the water we drink be clean and pure?

Will this country have met successfully the economic challenges of inflation coupled with recession? Will there be full employment or shall we still be nagged by millions of willing men and women unable to find work? Shall we have gotten the "welfare monkey" off our backs or still have millions of fellow-citizens doomed to continue living at the expense of other more productive society members?

Will educational institutions continue their seemingly perpetual battle for the taxpayer's dollar? Or will the system have been revolutionized by modern communications? Will parents and television, instead of teachers and bus drivers, be in control of childhood education? Or will women in the labor force have so greatly increased that children, from nursery-school age through college, will be raised institutionally? In which direction shall we be headed at the end of the decade?

What of our other social problems? What changes will come to those now classified as minority groups? Will their lots have improved? Change is inevitable; the question is only whether it will be for better or worse. And the answer may differ, depending on your viewpoint.

What social changes will have come about, during the ten years we have only this week launched, to affect our rapidly growing population of elderly? Shall most of those who reach what has been considered recently the age of retirement be continuing to work throughout the '80's and into the '90's? Will there be jobs for them as well as for the ranks of young people joining the labor pool year after year?

What technological advances shall we have achieved? Shall some of us be living on satellites in space? Under the seas? Or beneath the earth's crust? Will resources as yet unknown be discovered and tapped? Or shall we have reverted to burning coal? Will nuclear fission have solved all the difficulties presented by nuclear fusion?

No one today can answer these questions. The next ten years will bring us no closer to some urgently needed answers but some will have been found. A decade hence, none of us will be the same, exactly, as we are today. Some haven't even arrived yet; others will have departed. The majority - all those here now and still alive then - will be older by ten years.

Yes, change is inevitable; it's up to us to be certain that change, as it comes, is for the better, that progress is truly advancement and improvement rather than regression or deterioration.

Whatever the '80's hold in store, it's unlikely the years ahead will be tedious ones. The promises of the coming decade are refreshing and invigorating. When we look back upon them from 1990, we may recognize them as the most innovative of this country's history.

If necessity is the Mother of Invention, there's more demand for creativity in the immediate future than in any period of peace in the near or distant past.