

2018: A Year in Observations

Written by Margaret Evans

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By Margaret Evans, Editor

It's time, once again, to honor the tradition I started last year. (Two years in a row is a tradition, right?) After a harrowing excavation of my Facebook timeline, which I treat as a public diary, I've stitched together a "year in review," made of personal observations, great and small. (Note: Some are very small and "great" is a relative term.) Here's a taste of what was happening in the world, in the Lowcountry, and in my head in 2018.

JANUARY

- • When I recently insisted on painting our house dumpster gray, "looks great with snow" did NOT play into my decision. It's just a bonus! #SnowingInBeaufort
- • It's so very easy to become the mirror image of what you hate. But it's not inevitable. We all have a choice, every day. [#Resist](#)
- • Once again, I have just driven past a shoe in the middle of the road. One shoe. This recurring phenomenon is one of life's great mysteries to me.

FEBRUARY

- • Our enormous, crazy, messy, beautiful, country. [#SuperBowl2018](#) [#GodBlessAmerica](#)

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- • I just heard the most amazing interview on NPR with the father of a 14-year-old girl who was killed in the Parkland massacre. He was calm and thoughtful – though, obviously, devastated – and refused to be drawn into any expression of divisiveness, hatred, or simplistic partisan platitudes. My God. The courage and grace of that man. I am in awe.
- • Choir practice tonight. Cheaper than therapy, safer than drugs.

MARCH

- • I will never join a movement that can't (or won't) acknowledge the complexity of American life or the common decency of its opponents. Such movements feel dishonest, unjust, and uncharitable to me, and no matter how good the cause, I won't join. Call me "apathetic." Call me "complicit." Call me whatever you want. But if you do, you have failed to listen, and failed to read my mind, and you are simply wrong. I don't join movements for a very specific reason . . . which I have just explained. That is all.

- • Apparently, Jeff Daniels will play Atticus Finch in Aaron Sorkin's adaptation of *To Kill A Mockingbird* on Broadway. Now that Atticus has been knocked from his pedestal – by Harper Lee, herself, in

Go Set a Watchman

– the mind reels at the thought of what these two might cook up for the late, great cultural icon. Buckle up, theater-goers.

- • Finally got a new iPhone. Went from 5 to 8. Feeling like Rip Van Winkle over here. Overwhelmed.
- Parents of toddlers: Start saving for prom NOW.

APRIL

- • I just read that the Windsor newborn (name TBD) weighed in at 8lbs 7oz. If I'm not mistaken, that was my birth weight, too. My mom once confessed that she was embarrassed to tell anybody. "Babies were *never* that big back then," she said. "I was mortified!" I'm feeling validated today. Long live bonny Prince What's-His-Name!

- • "Everybody knows" is not an argument. The phrase does not impress or intimidate me. Use "everybody knows" on me at your own risk. Go ahead. Release the kraken.

MAY

- • I can't stop thinking about Yanny & Laurel – the way the "truth" of the sound actually changes depending on who's hearing it. The implications seem important.
- • If you enter a party and feel an overwhelming urge to flee, coupled with a reflexive need to hug everyone you encounter, you might be a southern introvert.

JUNE

- • Oh, plastic bag, your days are numbered. You have worn out your welcome, old friend. Here in our watery Lowcountry domain, you have suffocated our sea turtles and entangled our shore birds and, alas, we must banish you. 'Tis right and just. But I shall miss you, plastic bag. The way you fit so neatly in my bathroom trashcans; the way you rose to the occasion when my daughter became too cool for a lunchbox; the way you doubled up to bear the most unsavory concoctions from the back of my fridge to the outdoor trashcan; your humble willingness to scoop cat poop. Oh, plastic bag, you had a good run and you will be missed. Fare thee well, and Godspeed.

JULY

- • Jeff and I are home tonight, like the fogies that we are, but our daughter is out with her friends on this Fourth. I hope they find fireworks. I hope they get lumps in their throats. If somebody plays some Lee Greenwood, that's okay, too. Sentimentality is underrated, I think, at times like this.

- • Lately, I keep seeing liberals waxing poetic about the "good" conservatives of yore – Reagan, Bush, Romney, etc. – and conservatives longing for the way liberals "used to be" – tolerant, open-minded, compassionate – and it makes me wonder: If our two rival tribes had respected each other more "back in the day" – treated each other as honorable opponents instead of evil miscreants to be destroyed – would we be in a better place now? I think we would be, but I don't see us learning that lesson. It feels like we dug our own grave and we're determined to just keep digging.

AUGUST

- • I got my first hummingbird feeder a few days ago. Was skeptical that I'd actually lure any of those ethereal creatures my way. They're right up there with seahorses for me in terms of being ridiculously magical. I don't entirely believe in them. But it's working! I've glimpsed a couple out the window already, and one just came and hung in the air beside me, vibrating, as I sat out here with my wine. It's like having fairies in your yard!

- • They will never take my humor. I'll strap it down. Send it to the basement. Lock it in the closet. Hide it between the pages of a favorite book, like a flower. Pressed and secret. But I will not give it up. Hell no.

SEPTEMBER

- • Update from my diverse newsfeed: Those who typically liked John McCain in life can't stand him now, and those who criticized and insulted him in life have damn near deified him in death. We are a fascinating lot, we humans, and hard pressed to be honest, even with ourselves. Maybe 'especially' with ourselves. The elephant – emotion – is a powerful beast. The rider – reason – thinks he's steering, but he's mostly just holding on for dear life.

- • Is "skeewampy" an actual word, or just one of those expressions I thought everybody else used, too, till I realized my mom made it up?

OCTOBER

- • When I was 12, my parents drove us from Alabama up to New York City, with a stop in colonial Williamsburg along the way. This was a BIG deal for our family. There were four of us, all girls, and I was the oldest, so you can imagine the commotion in that station wagon. Not sure how my dad survived it, but he is a gentle man, and always muddles through with grace. We saw 'Annie,' my first Broadway show, and we spent the night at the Algonquin Hotel. I still remember my mother telling me about Dorothy Parker and the round table. From that day forward, it never occurred to me that I couldn't have a seat at the round table, too. Or any table. I'm just starting to realize how lucky I am. Thanks, Mom.

- • I don't typically do "outrage," but I need to get this off my chest. Whoever defaced the headquarters of the Democratic Party here in Beaufort – and pulled up all their signs – has

really ticked me off. It kills me to see the nastiness of our national politics writ large here in my own small town, where Republicans and Democrats still work and play side by side, and tribalism hasn't completely wrecked everything. Yet. Beaufort is better than this. Isn't it? I am angry and sad.

NOVEMBER

- • Amelia and I have had so many great chats (and sing-alongs) while driving through the stunningly autumnal southeast on this college tour. For instance, I broke it to her that the Pottermore website had sorted me into Slytherin House (she took it better than I did!), and she delighted me by having lots of old Elton John and Dexi's Midnight Runners on her Spotify list.

DECEMBER

- • Y'all, the Bush funeral just about did me in. I have been crying for two hours. I feel like I've just fallen in love with my country, my religion, and humanity . . . all over again.
- • Apparently, there's been a public outcry against the dissing of "Baby, It's Cold Outside." Even the listeners to NPR – of which I am one – have collectively said, "Get over it, already." The People have spoken, and what they've said is this: We like flirtation, we like sassy banter, we like this song, and those of us who *don't* . . . know how to change channels. I feel hopeful.

Margaret Evans is the editor of Lowcountry Weekly. Read her regular column at [Rants & Raves](#) or visit her blog at www.memargaret.com