



By Margaret Evans, Editor

Back in May, I put together a "graduation address" of sorts, using random posts from my Facebook timeline, where no opinion is too trivial to go unexpressed. It was so much fun (i.e. so easy), I decided to stitch together a "year in review" using the same method. Behold, a smattering of miscellaneous thoughts that crossed my mind in 2017 - some decidedly less profound than others.

JANUARY

I need to get something off my chest. (Consider yourself warned.) I have been trying *so hard* to keep an "open mind" about Donald Trump - and encouraging others to do the same - despite the fact that the man is giving me very little to work with, and often seems hell-bent on making it impossible. Nevertheless, I have persevered, because I truly believe in giving this new president a chance and - especially - respecting those people who voted for him with enthusiasm and hope in their hearts. But when I see those same people displaying such open hostility, disrespect, and just plain

meanness

toward our outgoing president, it makes me angry and disappointed and I wonder why I even bother. The Obamas have been exemplary in the White House - models of graciousness, dignity and warmth. Even if you loathe Obama's politics, please, at least have the decency to acknowledge these good people who have served us for the past eight years. When you defend Trump for his every outrageous statement or action, but can't find anything remotely nice to say about this lovely family, I question more than just your judgment. I question our ability to survive as a country. We can't allow our political ideologies to thicken and harden into cataracts that blind us from the truth, and from our common humanity. We have to fight that impulse, y'all.

FEBRUARY

My careful study of Facebook suggests we're heading back to a place where we can only communicate -☹☹ truly touch each other and understand each other -☹☹ through pictures. So much for progress. #HieroglyphicsAreUs

MARCH

"Silence is consent." I keep reading that all over Facebook. "Silence is consent." Well . . . no. Not necessarily. Sometimes, silence is just silence. It means "I don't know enough to comment." Or, "I'm still doing my research and thinking this over." Sometimes, silence means "I see people over-simplifying a complicated subject; I can't do that." Sometimes, it means "This is a hot topic and I don't want to fight," or "I care more about being in relationship than being right," or "I agree with you, but this thread feels like an angry mob, and I don't want to join in." Sometimes, silence can even mean "I'm on deadline and don't have time for FB right now." Facebook has become a very loud, contentious, aggressive space. Sometimes, silence is just a stepping back, a turning inward, a preference for peace. We are not obligated to publicly comment about anything. Ever. Yes, we do have obligations to each other - plenty of them - but proclaiming our positions on Facebook is not one of those obligations. Sometimes, silence is just silence.

APRIL

* If you always blame 'them,' you just don't get it. It's '☹☹ us.'☹☹ It's always been us.

* Rites of passage. This morning, Amelia was far less interested in pillaging her Easter basket (yes, we still do that) than in watching the SNL episode she recorded last night. We are happy to report that not only is Christ risen, but Harry Styles has been reborn as a solo artist. And now, it's off to church! Happy Easter, y'all. Wishing you a day of sacred *and* profane joys.

MAY

There are certain lies that I will tell myself over and over, despite all historical evidence to the contrary. My current favorite is: "It's okay that I only got two hours of sleep last night. I'll just take a nap sometime later today."

JUNE

* "Wonder Woman" is epic! Philosophical, theological, almost Tolkienesque. And all anybody wants to talk about is the feminism. Snooze.

* I just spent an inordinate amount of time looking for a beautiful, insightful quote for Father's Day. Turns out they are remarkably scarce. (Dads are always getting short shrift, despite being absolutely indispensable.) So in lieu of a timeless profundity, I'll just say it again: Thanks for everything, Dad. I love you.

JULY

* Best online comment I've read all day: "There is no reconciling with people whose brains are like furnaces glowing hotly with sanctimony."

* People are being truly decent about John McCain's cancer. Goodness chokes me up these days.

* Had lunch at Moe's. Felt like an idiot asking a teenage boy for The Funkmeister.

AUGUST

* Migrating blackbirds along the cypress wetlands trail this morning. Invisible, then they lifted from the trees like a wave of arpeggios . . . like someone was shaking a blanket across the sky. I didn't get a picture. Just a thrill.

* My eclipse experience was kinda like the time I finally got the Easy Bake Oven for Christmas. #disappointed

* Happy Hour Mysticism. First, three crows circled over my head, then a cardinal flew across my path, then a strong wind blew out of nowhere. "Dear Lord," I cried, "What are you trying to tell me?! Please don't ask me to become one of those women who speak in nonstop jargon and have no sense of humor!!! But, of course, thy will be done." Waiting for my answer.

SEPTEMBER

Note to the next young person who aims to lecture me using social justice jargon: Don't bother. I was "□□ woke" before you were born, but I don't speak that language. I find it sterile, reductive, dehumanizing, and worst of all -□□ ugly. I will just start quoting Shakespeare at you. Or singing a madrigal. Or maybe even yodeling. Please spare us both.

OCTOBER

I have never feared evil in an individual. We all have a dash of evil -□□ at least -□□ but most of us contain it, most of the time. It's the evil of the mob I fear. The kind that multiplies, metastasizes, and convinces itself - by popular agreement -□□ that it is, in fact, good. Piling on . . . ganging up . . . scapegoating . . . torching and pitchforking. Witches are scary, but I fear witch hunts more.

NOVEMBER

* Sometimes, I remind myself of a cat. I meow like crazy for somebody to open the door, and when they finally do, I just stand there . . . not going through it.

DECEMBER

* People think I'm a "crazy fundamentalist" when I say things like this. (In reality, I'm not a fundamentalist at all, though I probably *am* crazy.) Anyway, when I see these fires blazing through California, and think of all the recent hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes . . . And I witness the way we humans treat ourselves and each other -□□ how wrong we get it, so much of the time -□□ I have a hard time keeping the word "Apocalypse" out of my thoughts.

* In these turbulent times, I typically strive to be a peacemaker, but today I feel I must take a stand on an important issue: "Baby, It's Cold Outside." I like this song. I find it delightful and fun to sing. This holiday season, as in years past, Facebook is divided between those who find the song "creepy" and "rapey" and those, like me, who find it flirty and romantic. I've been told my fondness for this song puts me on the "wrong side of history." If so, I can live with that. But in my heart of hearts, I don't really believe history has a "wrong side" and a "right side." And even if it does, where do we draw that line? Is everything before
today
wrong, and everything after
tomorrow
right? Hmmmm . . . I tend to see history as less linear and more cyclical. For example: There was a time when we all agreed the Puritans were on the "wrong side of history," but now they've come back around. And man, they really hate "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

* Every time an ideologue hijacks a Facebook thread, an angel loses its wings.