

Springhouse Ink

I was talking to a friend about a rusty horse-drawn manure spreader the other day. Technology has advanced. We no longer need to feed and keep horses to spread our manure. The Internet and social media are doing a fine job.

Many were eager for 2017 to be over. It was the year when the news sent blood pressures into migraine territories. It was the year when friends had trouble avoiding politically-charged conversation. It was the year in which questions begged other questions, like, “Which side are you on?” This was the year of hard questions with careful or contentious answers.

Sometimes people want to hide and buy all their goods online rather than risk uncomfortable conversation in the markets. Maybe it’s the year we got to know our UPS and FedEx drivers.

Maybe it’s the year we gained a rapport with our local liquor store owner. They are always good for a conversation. Maybe we learned about the properties of pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon and merlot and gained knowledge of the area distributors. We stick to the items at hand, which are comforts.

Maybe the year 2017 was when we discussed the transcendental properties of Chinese mustard with our local proprietors of Asian cuisine. Consume enough Chinese mustard and there comes a moment of raw experience, like a Thomas Fire of the sinus cavity or a Hurricane Irma of the brain. Speech, analysis, motility all fail in that one moment when the central nervous system succumbs to incapacity. The Chinese must have a word for that sensation. I have a word for it: Bliss.

The Russians are trying to mess with our elections. The North Koreans are threatening nuclear war. Our leader is egging them on while taking public swipes at the agencies intended to protect us. Protective agencies are downsizing. People are losing jobs and are looking at getting drug tested for food stamps. People stock up on bullets and bump stocks and ignore their diets, because — they say with a shrug — it’s the holidays.

It’s in these times of anxiety my mind repeats a well-worn phrase: Retreat to the safety of the familiar. Do the work you know how to do and do it well. Enjoy the aroma of a roast, a pot of chili or cookies working their way toward perfection in the kitchen. Put an extra blanket on the bed and crank up the floor fan to drown out the devil’s scratchings at the door.

There is a new *Star Wars* in theaters. That’s something that could unite us, if we ignore online fan comments. But right on the heels of that and nuclear missile talk we get former government officials explaining there are objects flying around in the air that don’t fit any technology known to mankind. In fact, they are saying if a human was inside one of

these craft the G-forces exhibited in their aerial dynamics would destroy that human.

Surely this new UFO recognition is something that can unite mankind, if we can agree to be amazed by the circumstance. If we can’t agree on that concept, then we can plan for the next New Madrid earthquake to wipe the proverbial slate clean. A good tabula rasa every few hundred years can be a healthy thing, like fasting or a devastating fire.

Keep your eyes on the sky in the coming months. Stock up on canned goods and make sure there is a functional can opener at hand, good advice any time of year. We can’t plan for everything, but even the least paranoid of us can set back a modest stock of survival items, which should include reading material. And remember, these hills have our backs.

In this issue we explore experiences in the Garden of the Gods area, past and present; continue John J. Dunphy’s Alton-area *Tales From the River Bend*; continue Todd Carr’s series *Trigg’s Trails, Tales and Detours*; bring Dixie Terry’s recipes for the chilly season to your home; and may find a few surprises on the journey from Page 3 to 48.

The adventure continues...

