

Y2K, my ascot!

On New Year's Eve, December 31, 1999, my wife and I went out to dinner with a couple of my friends and their wives.

Even though we knew by the time we started dinner at Poor Richard's that no calamity was going to befall anyone or anything that night - because January 1, 2000 had hit in New Zealand and made its way toward us in the Mountain Time Zone uneventfully - it was a sober night. Sober not in serious but in no alcohol.

The other two couples went home before midnight but my wife and I usually see the new year in and that night was no exception. We watched fireworks at Frontier Park from the parking lot of American Legion Post 6 and then called it a night. The hoax perpetrated on people around the world by the tech-wonks had ended predictably. Without incident.

About the only lasting evidence of Y2K is a professional wrestler, the son of former hockey great Ted Lindsey who goes by the name Chris Jericho, who adopted the "handle" Y2J to tie into the hoax and may still be using it. Don't know for sure - haven't followed the WWE for a few years. Monday nights used to be the night the WWE show was televised so I used that as the reason I couldn't attend city council meetings. Wrestling was on and that was more important, I told those who asked if I'd be at the council meeting.

For those who don't remember, Y2K was a name given to midnight, December 31, 1999 - the end of a decade, the end of a century - the end of a millennium. And, supposedly, there was great risk that computer systems around the world would crash because of a lack of planning for how the abbreviated "00" would affect computers. Interestingly, it was of no concern when "90" came and went.

The argument was that "00" could confuse dates to conflict with the year 1900. Looking back, it doesn't seem like there were very many computers in use in 1900 and how many programs went back to 1900 and used just the two digits "00" to represent that beginning of century date?

But, just like there were apple scares and cranberry scares, etc., there had to be a computer scare to generate additional revenue for the wonks who could design corrections for this mythical problem.

So, the world waited anxiously as the date change occurred at the Prime Meridian that night ten years ago. But, except for Chris Jericho, not much happened. In Cheyenne, either because of the potential crash of computers or because it was the millennium, fireworks were provided at Frontier Park. And this year? We got Carson Daly, Ryan Seacrest, Anderson Cooper and the ever brave Dick Clark bringing in New Year's time after time for each time zone in the U.S. And, of course, filthy, unfunny and untalented Kathy Griffin using the most obscene word live on national television.

Unlike Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" at the Super Bowl halftime show (that no one noticed until it was replayed ad nauseam), the FCC won't try to fine CNN (the earlier CBS fine didn't stand either) because it was on cable. Not to mention that it was on CNN, a cable network that started the revolution away from network TV and now no one watches.

I'm prepared. A computer geek is going to tell me how wrong I am. How only the preparation for Y2K avoided disastrous results. All I know is that companies paid millions of dollars for "corrections" that the rest of us didn't take without consequence. Happy Y2J, Chris.

The "aught" decade

Or, "The Decade of the Herald"

The first ten years of the new millennium almost matches the first years of the Cheyenne Herald. And while it's easy for the daily to list their top stories for any given year (or extended period of time), it has become increasingly difficult for me to sort out the stories that appeared on the pages of the Cheyenne Herald that I thought were "best," most important, or had the most impact.

This particular issue of the Cheyenne Herald begins the ninth year of publication. The issue you have in your hands is No. 186. I'm told that's the longest any alternative publication has ever lasted in Cheyenne. That could be. But, that was never the goal. In fact, there has never really been "a goal" or goals. Well, I suppose a goal might be to publish long enough to earn the subscriptions readers have advanced. Beyond that, I just keep plugging away - one at a time.

In the United States, of course, we were the target of attacks of terrorism on September 11, 2001. For a time, Americans rallied together in a way that is seldom seen beyond crises. The nation has become so polarized, much of it politically centered but in other ways also. Sexual orientation brings out the loudest outcries - in opposition and in support of equitable treatment regardless of whether one is gay or straight. Some states passed legislation to recognize "gay marriage." California, a state that would elect a "D" list actor their governor, took the question to the voters and it was repealed.

The end of the decade saw the United States federal government take over private businesses like General Motors and prop up financial institutions unlike anything in the past. Socialism remains a frightening word but what is happening in many ways and in many places is nothing short of the introduction of socialism.

A national healthcare plan has progressed farther than ever before. From the days of Harry S Truman, Democrats have attempted to nationalize the healthcare industry but always before

were unsuccessful. In this legislative cycle, the Dems have the majority, with the aid and collaboration of two independents in the Senate, including one Socialist. One Democrat, Robert Byrd of West Virginia, is infirm and may not realize just how he is voting but his vote will be the deciding one. (Byrd is also third in line of succession to the presidency by virtue of being president pro tem of the Senate. He has served 50 years.) The government takeover of healthcare as we've known it is an almost certainty.

Those who chronicle history will have their hands full when they write about this decade. It may go down as the beginning of a startling change in our form of government. Change heretofore unimaginable. But, the American people will reclaim their country. It is just a question of how long it will take. They will not tolerate federal "pay czars" who determine salaries to lead industries they know nothing about. When healthcare is even more rationed than it is now by insurers and the medical field, Americans will switch political parties and re-elect those they believe can return the nation to democracy as they've known it. Not perfect but better than any other form of government.

This first decade in the new millennium brought fundamental changes to our way of life. Home foreclosures. 401K devastation. Federal aid, investment and takeovers of private industry. More personal bankruptcies than almost any time in history. Gasoline prices of over \$4.00 a gallon. Public education regressing, nor improving. Airplanes brought out of the sky by terrorists and others landed safely by marvelously competent and calm pilots. Whether into the Hudson River or onto the runway in Los Angeles with the landing gear turned sideways, there were positive outcomes under great stress. And the heroism of passengers on Flight 93 in 2001 and Flight 253 on Christmas Day, 2009 will always be remembered.

A decade with too much trial and not enough triumph but another decade we'll weather. And survive and get stronger.

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