

Opinion

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Reporter does job, but feels the pain

OK, SO THE New Year is upon us. The first days of January mean post-holiday headaches, the Rose Bowl and the necessary consumption of antacid tablets.

Everybody's favorite pastime — as the old year meets the new — is writing New Year's resolutions.

I'm not going to waste time by listing the typical entries on those wish sheets. You know which ones I'm referring to. You're probably working on a couple as you read this.

Instead, I'll offer a personal resolution that, as a reporter, I should strive to meet but, as a human being, know it will be hard to achieve.

I WILL NOT let my emotions get in the way of reporting a story.

OK, I got that off my chest. But every time I must report a

murder or tragic death, as I have several times in recent months, that resolution will surely be tested. Cold objectivity is required to gather news, but I have never been one who could turn emotions on and off like a faucet.

There won't be any more New Year resolutions for Pontiac's Lea Marie Neff, the victim of a fiery automobile crash in Southfield last month.

Arkan Kalawa of Southfield won't have any more holiday headaches either. He was stabbed to death three days before Christmas outside the Detroit grocery store which he co-owned.

Music lover Michael Apt won't be around to hear all the new sounds of 1987. The former Southfield High student and employee of Southfield



Tim Smith

schools was gunned down outside a Detroit nightclub last October. He was on his way to Harpo's that night to listen to the music.

ALL OF THOSE victims seemed to be young, bright with the prime of their lives still awaiting them. What a pitiful waste.

Please let me know if I'm letting my emotions get the best of me.

No less a tragedy was the brutal slaying of prominent Lutheran minister Dr. Frank Madsen last November in his Southfield senior citizens apartment.

The fact that he was 81 did take some of the sting out of that tragedy. But finding out what the murderer did to him was maddening. Viewing blood-splattered household items as they were removed from Madsen's apartment by police was sickening.

He could have been 181, and the result would have been just as senseless. How can anybody treat another human being with absolutely no regard or compassion?

All, BUT reporters are only vehicles from which to gather names, places, dates and details, right? That's a load of stereotypical garbage.

Reporters, of course, have to ask essential questions, many of which are painful to answer, in order to do their jobs. Asking some of those questions, particularly of family members trying to overcome tragedy, can be just as painful.

In covering Kalawa's death, I had to confront his family and friends at a Southfield funeral home. It wasn't easy.

They were lined up along the sitting room wall, crying their hearts out for Arkan who was only 27 when he died.

It was Christmas Eve. Kalawa's brother-in-law had said the family was looking forward to a happy Christmas. Instead, their holiday was shattered.

INTO THAT SCENE walked this

reporter, carrying a large, yellow legal note pad. I was there to pick up a photograph of Arkan and, perhaps, collect a few additional bits of information for my story. Virtually all interviewing for the story had been conducted earlier over the telephone.

I felt terrible being there, an unwanted intruder. They looked at me with obvious hurt on their faces and wondered why I was there during their private time.

I never knew Arkan Kalawa, but I was hurting with them.

That funeral home was the last place on earth that I wanted to be. My job required that I be there.

I just hope Arkan's family realizes that. Reporters also have emotions.

Some just conceal them better than others.

Winter needs a hot January holiday

Winter is the cruellest season. It drives everybody off the streets, into house arrest like a military occupation. Cold and blasting winds curl through the neighborhoods and pile snow on the elegant boulevards. People swathe themselves in dreary blue parkas and heavy boots, stomping

reluctantly and blowing frigid breath through raw red lips.

Winter makes each house a fortress, tidily provisioned against the howling climate. Who doesn't buy an extra can or two "just in case" and stock up on whatever one might need for a winter siege? Wood is laid and

hearties are cheery, but the very air is imprisoned in sealed houses, stale and dry and breathed four or five times.

It's times like these that you can understand the Ice Age. You can feel in your very soul the massive, grinding, world-destroying glaciers as they come a-grinding down. It started like this you know, a blanket of fiercely driven snow, then another and another.

Soon mastadons and polar bears will wander down Woodward Avenue, sniffing at the rime-crustured shop windows, bellowing and fighting in the median. You can all but see them and at night, when you're lying under the down comforter, you can clearly hear from far away the howling of the wolves.



Chuck Moss

THE PROBLEM with Michigan winter is that it lasts too long. In San Francisco, it ends after Christmas. That's the right idea. Perhaps the biggest flaw in winter is not natural, but man-made: there are simply no good holidays to break it up. I don't mean "Washington-Lincoln's B-day", or Valentine's Day. I mean real holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving.

What we need is a "January-end"

holiday, a celebration of winter being more than half-over. A Hump Day for winter. This wouldn't be a "winter carnival." The only people who enjoy winter carnivals are folks who are already into polar-bear sports. Folks building ice castles and racing sleds and skates are all very nice, but those aren't the people who need cheering up.

What we need is a January-End Celebration, a Return of the Light Holiday. While Christmas trees would be gone, most yule decorations (particularly outdoor ones) would remain up until Mid-Winter. That way the neighborhoods could stay gay and lit through the depth of winter. Also we wouldn't have to take the stuff down in the cold.

PEOPLE COULD exchange gifts at Mid-Winter, small things, not like

the big treats of Christmas, but softer. More mellow. Mid-Winter could also be an excuse to have parties, to meet the people you used to see when the weather was nice.

Surely a festival at the end of January is one way to survive the depth of the yearly Ice Age. Another way is to prolong the spirit of Christmas.

The best way I know to stretch out the Christmas season is to continue with the activities of the holiday. That's what I do.

How? I address and mail late Christmas cards. I shop for, and wrap, and send out presents to folks I forgot or put off. I also finish decorating the tree. So there's another and highly compelling reason for a January holiday: to let us catch up on the chores we should have had finished by Christmas.

Southfield readers' forum

Letters must contain the signature and address of the sender. Please limit letters to 300 words. Send them to the editor, Southfield Eccentric, Box 187, Southfield 48037-0187.

Story captured dad's essence

To the editor:
I am writing to you to highly commend Tim Smith on the outstanding obituary he wrote about our father, **Herb Kaufman**.
Dad was a very special person and left us with a wonderful heritage. Mr. Smith captured his image so beautifully and presented him as the

sensitive caring person that he was. Of all the articles written about Dad, the one that appeared in the Eccentric was by far the most outstanding. On behalf of our entire family, I thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Herbert Kaufman
Southfield

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