



As we watch the sun come up, ringing in a New Year, maybe we can resolve to just do it a little better. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Daily Press)

A year in the books

By MARK RACKAY
TIPS FROM THE POSSE

Sitting in front of a keyboard, vainly trying to assemble your thoughts so your reader can reasonably relate to your writing, is not a simple process. One does not just bang away at the keys with words magically appearing in print. Personally, I spend more time starting over because I did not like what I wrote. I wrote a piece for the New Year and passed it off for my wife to review. She gave it a 2-thumbs down, fully rejecting the idea. She accused me of being overly negative, and that my pessimistic qualities were showing through. She went on to lecture me that the New Year is a fresh start, a do over of sorts, and a chance to put the bad behind us and start fresh. Generally, I don't subscribe to that line of thinking. All of the problems, worries, and concerns I had on December 31st do not magically disappear with the turning of the page on the calendar, but in the interest of marital

bliss and harmony, I shall rewrite the piece with a more upbeat tone. Most people look at the New Year with that whole "new me, new life" type thought process and begin the year with a bunch of resolutions. Much to the chagrin of my wife of many years, I do not subscribe to that school of thought. They will vow to lose weight, get in shape, climb the tallest mountain, or hike the longest trail. I am not one of them. Yes, I need to lose some weight and get into better shape, but I know that by the 2nd week of January, I will have failed to keep any of the resolutions I made in a celebratory moment dating back to the 1st of January. One thing for certain, is the deep love I have for the out of doors. All of us share this love for the outdoors, no matter what activity gets your motor running. Whether you are a serious hiker or backpacker, bicycle or ATV rider, hunter, fisherman, bird watcher or photographer, our ties that bind is the wilds of the out of doors.

My passion is hunting and fishing, and like so many outdoor sports, are a sport based on expectations. The very best hunters and fisherpersons are those who "expect" at any moment, the world's largest bull elk is going to pop into view, or the 200-pound tarpon is going to climb up from the depths and inhale your hand-tied fly. Would it not be fantastic to be able to live all of your life with those kinds of intense expectations? For my personal outdoor philosophy, all outdoor sports are primarily the enjoyment of just "being there." Being there in the moment, with friends, mountains, waters, views and experiences. Just being there. Maybe this year we can all promise to try and "be there" a little more often. Work, raising kids, school, bills, health, and life in general, all seem to get in the way of us doing what we really love. Let us all resolve to try and make a little more time for ourselves this year, and maybe make a few of those intense expectations become a reality.

While we are at it, is there something we can do, on an individual level, to make our outdoor world a little better place? I don't mean that we should get involved in the political world of laws and government, although some of that wouldn't hurt. I mean something we can do to make our little corner of Colorado a better place. For example, I read last summer that Forest Service crews found 8 separate, unattended campfires left smoldering on National Forest grounds, on one Sunday morning. We all know how fast a wind can come up and presto, a disaster is born. Maybe we can do better and make sure we are not the cause of a fire, considering how dry our half of the state is. It only takes a few more minutes, and a bit of responsibility, to clean up that campfire and make sure it is cold and dead before we head off to someplace else. I head out into the adobes fairly often, to ride around on an ATV and sometimes to go target shooting. One of the things that always get me

is the trash people leave behind. I picture someone heading to the landfill with a pickup full of trash, only to discover the landfill is closed. The person, who either suffers from a garden variety stupidity or just does not give a darn about our environment, heads off into the BLM land to dump his trash anywhere. Not only is this practice disgusting, it is illegal. And to my fellow target shooters out there, the same applies to you. I find bottles, cans, old tv sets, furniture, and just about anything else, all shot up and left there for someone else to clean up. Empty brass and shotgun shells left strewn around with the thought that maid service comes by once a day. We can do better. The BLM and the National Forest that make up the large portion of our counties, Delta and Montrose, belong to all of us. We want to spend our free time, pursuing the outdoor passions we love, on the Grand Mesa and the Uncompahgre Plateau. Maybe we can promise to make sure we are not part of the problem and

pick up after ourselves. While we are at it, maybe we can resolve to clean up a little for those who left the garbage behind for the nonexistent maid service. Maybe I can admit to being a "practical pessimist" instead of just being negative about everything. Let's not make a bunch of resolutions, setting ourselves up for failure. Instead, let's all take a look at ourselves and the outdoor world we love so much. Perhaps there are a few things we can do to make our little corner of Colorado a better place. In the meantime, I will try and be a little more upbeat, in the interest of marital bliss. *Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and the Delta County Independent and is a feature writer for numerous sporting magazines. A world-class saltwater angler and an avid hunter promoting ethical and fair chase hunting and fishing, he travels the world in search of adventure. Feel free to contact him on his personal email for questions, comments or story ideas. elkhunter77@icloud.com*



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