

# FORUM

## Life is short, so be happy



**Nigel Alston**

**Motivational Moments**

*"We all face obstacles of one kind or another in life. But if you let your deepest passion serve as your fuel, you will be able to travel the road back and move on to make your dreams happen."*

- Dr. Francisco Bucio

I am happy my family loves me unconditionally, that I have a few good friends and a network of people who support and encourage me. I am happy I made it through another year with a "reasonable portion of good health," as the elders say. Judging by the comments I heard in church on Sunday night at our watchnight service, most people are glad to be alive to see another day.

If for no other reason, that's something to be happy about.

I am happy for the holiday season that produced a lot of laughter, allowed me to catch up on some much needed rest, good food, fellowship and the appreciation for being loved. Now, as we return to the reality of work, bills will be arriving in the mail soon and there is anticipation of the journey of another year.

What lies ahead? New Year's resolutions are the order of the day. Here is one to add to the top of your list: Life is short. Be happy! Life is what happens while you are making other plans. So, stop waiting until something happens to decide to be happy. Happiness isn't a thing, place or destination.

Some things do contribute to happiness though. Like the present my wife gave me for Christmas, a page-a-day calendar: The best of 14,000 things to be happy about. Each day lists 5 things to be happy about.

Item number 1 on the list for the first day of the year was a no brainer: the arrival of 2001. I

agree with that one and I am happy to see another year and look forward to the opportunities it presents. It was followed by two things that caused me to scratch my head, however: cucumber and mint sandwiches and syllabub. Syllabub? It's an old-fashioned milk punch. A drink made of sweetened milk or a cold dessert made with sweetened cream thickened with gelatin and beaten with wine, spirits, or fruit juice.

I'll pass on that one, but ordering books on-line and seeing the big picture are keepers. Here is a preview of some of the things to be happy about during the first week of this New Year.

Day 2: A belated birthday present, pinstripe suits, a nonsnoring partner, cookies with cherries on top and getting a good start. I saw a nice three-button gray suit with a brown pinstripe last week that would make me happy. And I think you would agree that getting a good start is important. As for a nonsnoring partner, my wife

would be happier.

Day 3: Knowing equivalents in other languages (not high on my list), a rip that's easily repaired, checking out an unusual store, helping someone move and free parking (that's a winner).

Day 4: Getting back to a normal schedule (what's normal anymore?), sinking into an overstuffed chair (that feels good), a fleecy pile jacket, warming your fingers on a hot coffee mug, cooperation and maturity (always a plus).

Day 5: Mentors (if you don't have one, make that a goal this year), a hot bath, your favorite soap opera ("Moral Court," "Pet Court," "Divorce Court"), chives cream cheese, and when you know what you want (now that is the most important one yet).

Day 6: Menus planned in advance, a welcome surprise visitor (that always produces a smile), learning answers to interesting questions, French onion soup and

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## The new year



**Armstrong Williams**

**Guest Columnist**

Every year at this time I used to wind up with some strange sense of dread. The headlines from the past year remind us of the tragedies of our time. The triumphs are often overwhelmed by them. For example, the end of the year is frequently marked by lists of the most prominent deaths. This year it will be: Carl Rowan, Steve Allen, Sir Alec Guinness, Gwendolyn Brooks, Walter Matthau, Tom Landry, Hosea Williams, etc.

One wonders, what tragedy will the new year hold?

Then faith returns, reminding us that all is not to be feared, but as seen in divine order. In that light, our perception of the new year can

only improve. This year we can be thankful that we walked the planet at the same time as people endowed with the power to touch the human spirit. The feeling slowly warms me. I feel the warmth as my fingers scribble away on my yellow pad. I am grateful for my health and that I am even alive to see the new year. I ask the Almighty to bless those who have passed as I lift my voice in thankful praise for the continuing gift of life.

I am happy that I have a voice as I enter into the new year, for there are many who do not. I refer to those who live in countries where their political system renders them mute. I also mean children in families where poverty, ignorance or abuse have snatched their hopes. There are so many others. With my voice, I can speak for many of them. I can also pray for them, that they will realize that no matter how softly spoken, God can always hear our voice.

We often enter a new year with a list of resolutions. This year, many of us should also resolve to keep our resolutions. The new year is an opportunity to change, to wipe the slate clean, take the lessons of the past and apply them to the future. As you can see, I have already learned to no longer dread the new year.

This new year, 2001, many people may view the recent elections with apprehension and anger. We don't need to do that. We should never lose sight of the fact that such a close election, so full of voter irregularities, would have caused tanks to roll out in the streets of most countries. Here, we had the freedom to decide the election through rational debate, through the friction of honest minds engaging one another in political discourse.

I have friends in Africa who marvel at the stability of the American government. Too often, they

have seen such crises detonate into armed conflict. Just recently, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe responded to democratic opposition in a parliamentary election by confiscating the land of those citizens he feared might oppose him. In one fell swoop, he empowered himself by removing the livelihood, stability and dignity of thousands.

We ought not to forget that the governments of other nations are programmed to destroy the opposition.

Now there's something to look forward to in the new year: another great opportunity to enrich the political debate by freely sharing diverse ideas. The strain we might feel at this moment is just the coalition building that births political progress. It is precisely this free flow of ideas that hauls along this great country.

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## Appointments send mixed message



**Val Atkinson**

**Jones Street**

President-elect George W. Bush has nominated Retired Army Gen. Colin Powell to become the first black secretary of state and Condoleezza Rice as his national security adviser. Does Bush get any credit from the African-American community for these nominations? Unfortunately not. You see, these two nominations are symptomatic of the base problem that African Americans have with the conservative right-wingers. Too many African Americans don't feel that right-wing conservatives really understand the needs of the African-American community.

African Americans have moved beyond being proud of the black principal's picture hanging in the newly integrated high school. We need more direct and immediate impacts. What too many right-wingers don't understand is that African Americans are a caring people, and especially caring toward those who are less fortunate and suffering.

Too many right-wingers think that African Americans subscribe to

the dog-eat-dog. I'm not my brother's keeper, I've got mine you get yours philosophy, but they're wrong. George W. Bush unfortunately felt that he could get Powell, Rice and Gonzales out front and appease the minority community. But what Cheney and Bush didn't account for was the savvy of the African-American public. African Americans know that the intelligence community, Bush's "kitchen cabinet" and the U.S. military will have as much to do with national security and foreign policy as Powell and Rice will have.

I applaud Powell's desire to have the Foreign Service Corps look like America, but there are some more pressing needs that most African Americans have. African Americans would rather have Rice and Powell sit in on discussions of issues such as Medicare, prescription drugs, school vouchers, affirmative action, driving while black and Social Security.

It's like this. Let's say it's late in the 19th century and Bush and Cheney wanted to impress the Native American community that his administration would be an inclusive administration and that he would do what's right by all Indian Americans. So he appoints Gerónimo, Cochez and Sitting Bull to ambassadorships in Ireland, Hong

Kong and Kenya, while at the same time he names Gen. George Armstrong Custer as his nominee for the post of secretary of the interior. As secretary of the interior, Custer would have comprehensive powers over all matters that affect the daily lives of all Native Americans.

Now I'll admit that Missouri Sen. Ashcroft will have considerably less impact over African Americans than Custer would have had over Native Americans, but the mere nomination of Ashcroft (who's no friend of women of minorities) sends a powerful signal to right-wingers and to the African-American community. Bush's nomination of Ashcroft basically says to the right-wingers (who paid for Bush's campaign), "I haven't forgotten where I came from and who got me here."

But to African Americans he's saying, "We'll give you two or three high-level positions, but when it comes to the critical social issues that impact daily living like civil rights, and the FBI, we'll leave that up to the conservative right-wingers.

And Bush has proclaimed, he'll have women in his cabinet as well; but when it comes to women like Gov. Christie Todd-Whitman of New Jersey, her pro-choice position eliminated her from DHHS consideration, so she can have the environ-

ment. Being pro-choice on pollination and soft on defoliation and oil spills is acceptable, especially to companies like big oil.

So there seems to be a Bush pattern here. Make offers to those who can't accept them (like Sen. Breaux) and put women and minorities in positions that won't tamper with the right-wing conservative approach he plans to pursue. And oh, by the way, did I mention that after he puts the Powells, Rices, Whitmans and Gonzales in place, he'll go up on the Hill and proclaim that he kept his promise to appoint minorities and women to key positions. And when he does, we should all hear (over the distant hills) the faint sound of the 7th Cavalry being lead by none other than George Armstrong Custer himself.

Let me be the first to say that as the 43rd president, George W. Bush should have the right to nominate whomever he wishes. After all it's his job to nominate and the U.S. Senate's job to confirm. With the U.S. Senate split 50-50 it will be difficult for Ashcroft to pass muster. Bush should also know that the majority of those who cared to vote (or that got their vote counted) didn't care for his brand of politics. And that means that fewer people than he thinks are being hoodwinked by his

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All requests for appropriate auxiliary aids and services to review and comment on the draft MTIP and Air Quality Summary should be made to Wendy Miller, City of Winston-Salem Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 2511, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27102 or by phone at (336) 727-2707, TDD (336) 727-8319.

ONLY WRITTEN COMMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2001 AT 5:00 P.M.

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