

Community Comment
December 20, 2013
Sam Pennisi

Christmas 2013

It's the Friday before Christmas and all through Humboldt County it's business as usual. In our case, that's a good thing. This county of ours is a unique community. We are liberal and conservative, we are well off and not so much, we respect authority and government and law enforcement but we are wary of power and it's corrupting influence on itself. We get along with one another and generally respect our differences. We enjoy a good quality of education from preschool to the University; but we don't take each other too seriously. We return wallets when we find them and treat visitors with care. We attend council meetings and supervisor's meetings, we express our opinions with out fear of reprisal and generally accept the democratic idea of majority rule. In local politics we tend to play by the rules.

Humboldt has basically signed on to the concept of a social contract; that is we agree to get along enough to be tolerant and accepting. These are qualities we should be proud of and continue to support. These are the qualities of Christmas.

There is no war on Christmas; this is a made up distraction. Of course there are people who wear their politics on their sleeves and become obsessed with an ideology or philosophy. We all know someone like this. I think the vast majority of us are closer to the middle than we think. We take political labels to try to have some influence in the public policies that affect our lives. My experience is that our differences are fewer than our similarities. Most of us understand that our country was founded on Judeo Christian principles. But we also understand that we must tolerate other ideals and religions because they add to the richness of our social fabric rather than threaten it. This country is a remarkable melting pot of cultures mostly because we know we must accept new additions to the pot and those new additions know they must be in the pot. Most of us get this.

I am constantly amazed at how more often our country works than not. It's not perfect but for two hundred plus years it's worked remarkably well. Every other week I've had the priviledge to express my point of view on various issues and topics. I do this because I have the opportunity to engage my fellow Humboldt County residents in a conversation about our lives together. My sixteen years as an elected official taught me that our political system, our way of life, works best when we participate in it. A civil and calm discussion with time to take in and reflect on different ideas and points of view is a way to learn without being defensive and enlarge our personal foundation. I think we live this in Humboldt County more than most other places in the world. It's the core of what makes a strong community.

I know this is an optimistic and maybe a simplistic view of our home; our community. It's the Christmas season and maybe I'm just feeling the seasonal spirit. But I am

optimistic and I think our community works far more than not. I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday and a great New Year. The central message is a hope for peace on Earth. Our declaration of Independence added something unheard of before as a governing ideal; the pursuit of happiness. That is a gift we need to remember we gave ourselves.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.