

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment

Here we are starting another new year. It seems that the older I get, the faster the years fly by. New Years Eve has changed over the years, at least in my book. In the nineteen thirties, when I was a kid, sights and sounds of New Years Eve were a bit different. Humboldt Bay was a busy harbor and the coming of midnight produced the sounds of many whistles and horns that will never be repeated in our present times. Most every lumber mill in the area (and there were plenty) was equipped with a steam whistle. The larger ships that happened to be docked in the bay on New Years Eve were also equipped with steam whistles and the small vessels had horns powered by compressed air. The railroad yards were also alive and any active locomotive added to the sounds with their steam whistles. I must not forget the fire horn atop the old City Hall located at Third and G Streets. Church bells added to the many sounds. In those days people had a tendency to gather in public places so you also had hundreds of people gathered in the downtown area to greet the New Year. They brought their noise makers along and those driving autos used their horns with great glee. Somewhere in the mid thirties, my parents took me down to San Francisco and we spent New Years Eve on the sidewalks of the city somewhere in the vicinity of Fifth and Market Streets. It was quite thrilling for me to be among the thousands of people who were gathered in the area that night. Now New Years Eve in Eureka has evolved into what sounds like a small war what with the gun shots and various kinds of fireworks. Explosions of various intensities started shortly after dark and continued throughout the evening until about one A.M. Gatherings now-a-days are now down to house parties with many people staying at home watching the celebrations on television taking place in the larger metro areas. If you do go outside, you do it with caution as one of the explosions that you just heard might be the discharge of a firearm into the air with a spent bullet on its way down to earth. One good thing about staying at home is the party drinker is not on the road adding to the drunk driving problem. As I sit and watch the throngs of people celebrating in Times Square, I wonder where they are from, how they got there and the long ride home when it is over. With the frigid temperatures the other night in New York I would imagine it was not a pleasant experience going home but I guess people living in or near big cities become accustomed to it. Above all, I hope that it was a happy time and well worth the effort for the revelers.

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