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'Tis the season for reflecting

Tis the Season to pause for a moment around a warm fireplace, sing that favorite holiday tune "Chestnuts Roasting On an Open Fire," and look back and ponder over the year 2006 – to count the fruits of our labor. The season of flowers or of promise may be about over, but now is the season of fruits. The most important question facing each of us: *Where is our fruit?* What have we done with our talent?

As I sat by my warm fireplace, sipping hot cocoa and roasting marshmallows, I came upon a paragraph written by Henry David Thoreau that returned my mind to the preceding year and to the question: *Where is my fruit!*

"I have just put another stick into my stove...I suppose I have burned up a pretty good-sized tree tonight—and for what? I settled with Mr. Tarbell for it the other day; but that wasn't the final settlement. I got off cheaply from him. At last, one will say, 'Let me see, how much wood did you burn, Sir?' And I shall shudder to think that the next question will be, 'What did you do while you were warm?'"

Ouch! That second question is painful to contemplate. What did I do this past year while I was warm, living in the Mile High City in the greatest country in the world, with certain inalienable rights: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

Did I make a positive difference in the life of another? George W. Young said: *"The greatness of a man can nearly always be measured by his willingness to be kind."*

Was I honest in all my dealings? Without honesty, our lives will degenerate into ugliness,



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your child's day care operator or kindergarten teacher?

Did I actively seek to improve my mind and talents? Education is the training of the mind. It is something that need never stop. No matter how old we become, we can acquire knowledge and use it. We can grow and progress and improve – and, in the process, strengthen the lives of those within the circle of influence. And the more pressing question: Have I actively sought the improvement of my children's mind and talents? As James Michener stated: *"A nation becomes what its young people read in their youth. Its ideals are fashioned then. Its goals are strongly determined. And the foundations are established for future action."*

Have I increased in wisdom and thought? We can gather wisdom and profit from it. I remember what Francis Bacon said about books: *"Some are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested."* I love to learn. I relish the opportunity to acquire knowledge. I savor the words of thoughtful writers, poets and musicians. May I be so bold as

to suggest that far too many people spend far too much time mesmerized by the mindless drivel that too often inhabits television, videos and the Internet. What a contrast it is, a refreshing and liberating contrast, to read the great literature of the ages.

Just imagine a society in which it would be unwise or unsafe to trust anyone—from elected officials to financial advisers to insurance adjusters to

Have I been gainfully employed? Nothing of real substance comes without work. Nothing happens in this world until there is work. It has been said: *"Work is the miracle by which talent is brought to the surface and dreams become a reality."* I am thankful for the opportunities I have had to work and magnify my talents and abilities!

Was I actively involved in civic affairs, rather than simply trembling on the sidelines, filled with anxiety about America? Did I vote? Have I written any letters to my political leaders expressing my opinions for their consideration? Am I an active member in my home community?

Yes, in retrospect, I have produced a *variety of fruit* from my labors this past year. My life has been filled with problems to solve and associations to savor. I have wrestled with dilemmas large and small. I have known something of discouragement and, on a few occasions, have felt the exhilaration of achievement. And I have come to see things a little more clearly through Mr. Thoreau, who so astutely observed: *"O how I laugh when I think of my vague, indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment!"*

Happy chestnut and marshmallow roasting!▲