

Strings of light in the Solstice season



Highland Views

Chris Highland
Guest columnist

“It is in vain to write on the seasons unless you have the seasons in you” (Henry David Thoreau, Journals).

Cold, star-scattered nights; crystal-clear skies and streams; naked forests with leafless (but not lifeless) trees; icy cascades in sheltered hollers; birds at the seed dish; bears in the slumber den. Images, emotions, reflections. Our senses filled, refilled and fulfilled.

In late autumn, the descent of leaves and temperatures clears the way for the ascending scents of early winter. Wisps of woodsmoke along the portals, passages, paths. A time of transition, trails winding in the wind – boughs waving, dappled red and green, gray and black. We are voyagers on the sea of the seasons. The shoreline becomes a ridgeline and our minds return to the mountains. Living palette of yin and yang – a tentative balance of everything.

In this season of stories, with tales of birth, light, liberation, we humans are both audience and actors. The shadowed show is ours – we create the set and play our part, interactive observers not sure what we

are really doing or watching. Our eyes and imaginations trace the traditions that string like lights through the centuries.

Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa. Jew, Christian, African-American. Illumined by warm hues on menorah, tree and kinarah, each blending in the Solstice sun – that great orb enlightening all lives, warming all hearths and hearts, firing and forging every god.

We stand in the middle, holding our palms out, open, like scales to weigh the fire and the snowflake, past and present, touching both suffering and the salvation.

In the manger of our memory we wonder.

Candles in frosted windows; greens on the doors and tables; hot tea, cider, chocolate or stronger “cheer in a cup.” St. Nick and candy sticks. Favorite films flicker again; doughy hands baking in a warm kitchen, while wandering in our thoughts to those on the streets – hunger, frozen feet, defeat.

Windows framed in small white lights. Simple gifts exchanged. Taking the time to open, smile, appreciate, hug – unwrap the moment. The gift of the Present.

Born in this season, this month, on the 25th day, I was a Christmas child, adopted (as we might say He was) and brought up by good loving parents (as we

See SOLSTICE, Page 2D