Blum’s Bits  
By Amy Blum

The start of a new year naturally brings resolutions, hope for days ahead and absolute focus on what’s yet to come. Champagne just doesn’t go the same with less joyful outlooks!

While I welcome the start of a new year with as much resolve as the next gal, I find myself appreciating a different side of festivities.

Looking forward and planning for the future is engrained in my DNA. But, on December 31—after the hoopla has quieted—I look back. For me, it’s the one time of year I give myself permission to go back in time and think about all the woulda, coulda, shoulda beens, all the what-ifs. There’s no wallow in regret. No time wasted on situations that can’t be changed. Just reflection on life and the lessons I’ve learned along the way.

Reflecting means I have to accept my past journey in order to really appreciate my current one. It also means I remember what a slow and stubborn learner I can be!

I’m quite certain I’m not alone in my reflective nature. Knowing what worked and what didn’t in the past is pretty darn important for each of us, from both a personal and professional standpoint. It’s equally important to recall those unanswered situations—those times we all have where no answer will ever surface but healing comes with each thought.

After the past year of Mayans threatening to send Angry Birds over some kind of cliff, I actually think more people should spend time thinking about where they’ve been in an effort to figure out where they want to go. But, I digress!

In honor of the fresh start we’re given each year, I’m sharing my reflections publicly in the hopes someone else can find value in them.

* **Time with children is finite.**  
  Life’s realities are sometimes quite harsh. None of us has time on our side. However, for what is oddly the first time, I realize how quickly the baby stage passes. I’ve seen it literally through tragic loss. I’ve also realized it through the quick passing of five years.

Almost suddenly, I have gone from rocking our doll-sized twins in the safety of a NICU room to sending them off alone to be influenced by people and situations I can’t control. Every stage is so special, so precious, so limited.  
  
The crazy thing is you don’t need kids of your own to really appreciate this reflection’s significance. At some point, you will cross paths with a child. Perhaps it’s the toddler screaming at church. Maybe it’s the elementary student flaunting a pink cowboy hat while attempting to navigate the stock show aisles poop-free. It might even be the teenage cattle enthusiast excited about the upcoming show and looking for advice.  
  
Whatever the case, how you interact with that child matters. What you say and how you say it means as much as what you don’t take the time to say or do. For a brief period in time, you will influence that young life. Will you make a positive difference, or will you squander the opportunity by deeming the interaction insignificant?

* **“Change, of any sort, requires courage.” –M. A. Radmacher**

A plaque bearing this adage hangs above my computer desk. I have read it a thousand times in the past year, and I’ll probably read it another thousand in the coming year.

As I think back over my life to this point, I’ve experienced my share of change. Though I didn’t realize it in the moment, accepting or making those changes required a level of pure, unadulterated courage to have faith. Those moments make my moments of flat-out fear even more glaring; hopefully, I have another year to work on that!

It doesn’t matter if you’re changing your underwear or your business model; both actions require a level of courage to know the change you’re making is the right one for you. And, in the case of underwear, I can assure you change is always the right decision.

* **There’s a season for everything, and once you’ve looked back, it’s time to move forward.**

The past is an important place to visit, but it’s no place to live. Taking time to reflect means allowing yourself time to slow down and breathe. Those actions are pretty critical pieces of life! But, once you’ve reflected on your journey, I encourage you to say a prayer of thanks and let it go—good, bad or otherwise.

Living a life of purpose, hope and faith means living today and dreaming of the future. Our past is behind us to serve as the motivation for tomorrow or the chip on our shoulder today … the choice is unique to each of us.

As we ag producers look back, there’s no doubt we’ve seen some rough patches. We can count on a few more in the New Year. But, we can also trust ourselves to learn from where we’ve been and come out stronger on the other side.

May the year ahead be filled with bountiful blessings, abundant joy and—if the good Lord can spare it—some much-needed moisture!