

# CREDO

## **Credo? What's that? It's not the same thing as a New Year's resolution, which is more a human-doing goal than a human-being goal.**

So, New Year's resolutions. Not a bad thing in concept. Despite their short shelf life, they do momentarily return us to better living habits, bring our attention to neglected goals: committing to a dreamed-of trip, more visits to the gym, eating more veggies, volunteering at Family Kitchen. Like most such lists they are often more self-revelatory than we realize. All about me? Others? 50/50? Enter the credo.

Credo? What's that? It's not the same thing as a New Year's resolution, which is more a human-doing goal than a human-being goal. Instead, for my money, a credo is a human-being goal inside which all the human-doing goals can fit. More mantra than memorandum. Your brass ring, true north, all your New Year's resolutions under one roof. Credo comes from the Latin word meaning "I believe" and is the first word of many religious creeds. So, is it a statement of what is? Of what's hoped for? A motto? A manifesto? A note to self or a note to the world? A battle cry? An olive branch? The answer to all these questions is yes and that's no koan or joke. The credo has long since found its way into the boardrooms of businesses, universities, barracks and banks, and now applies to any guiding principle or set of principles: Semper Fi, Veritas, The Winds of Freedom Blow, By Work All Things Increase and Grow or, what some jokingly suggest should be Visit Bend's slogan in its commitment to attracting people to town: Veni, Vidi, Velcro.

The idea of a credo as the uber resolution for 2023 was bandied about at a pre-New Year gathering of friends, all of a certain age. (We wondered out loud what Gen Xers, Millennials and Digital Natives would say.) The conversation quickly spotlighted the waste-no-timers: "Choose joy," one said immediately — as well as the over-thinkers stymied by whether a credo is a statement of something absolute and unchanging versus a current situation that needs attention such as "clean air and water for everyone."

The great, inspirational leaders were, no doubt, waste-no-timers. I'd guess their credo was at the tip of their tongue from the get-go. They had a special mission on their earth walk and they knew it. We just recognized the great Martin Luther King Jr., on Jan. 16, were reminded of his powerful, do-or-die mantra, "I have a dream." President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country," propelled me into the Peace Corps. Who hasn't been inspired by Eric Hoffer's oft quoted, "We are made kind by being kind." Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you want to see." He's also quoted above, originally coining the slogan, "Do or Die" which marked the beginning of the Quit India Movement in 1942.

What was evident in the responses at the gathering that night is that in phrasing a credo you are stating something about how you move in the world, who you are, what you stand for, where

you're headed. Here's an assortment from that evening as well as some from others I buttonholed since that occasion.

- No excuses
- Keep the main thing the main thing
- Be generous
- Embrace chaos
- Show up
- Be curious
- Less is more
- Choose happiness
- We'll see
- Live to benefit others
- Create space

On Jan. 1, 1943, Woody Guthrie, an American singer-songwriter and one of the most significant figures in American folk music, wrote a list of 33 "New Year's Rulin's" in his journal. A pop quiz: in reading these which are resolutions, and which are credos? Which, by implication, could include all the rest?

1. Work more and better
2. Work by a schedule
3. Wash teeth if any
4. Shave
5. Take bath
6. Eat good: fruit, vegetables, milk
7. Drink very scant if any
8. Write a song a day

9. Wear clean clothes — look good
10. Shine shoe
11. Change socks
12. Change bed cloths often
13. Read lots good books
14. Listen to radio a lot
15. Learn people better
16. Keep rancho clean
17. Don't get lonesome
18. Stay glad
19. Keep hoping machine running
20. Dream good
21. Bank all extra money
22. Save dough
23. Have company but don't waste time
24. Send Mary and kids money
25. Play and sing good
26. Dance better
27. Help win war — beat fascism
28. Love mama
29. Love papa
30. Love Pete
31. Love everybody

32. Make up your mind

33. Wake up and fight

I'm putting my money on 31, 32 and 33. And you?