Guest Column/William Oppenheimer

A New Year's dialogue

But please remember, this is only a work of fiction.

The truth, as always, will be far stranger.

Arthur C. Clarke
preface to 2001: A Space Odyssey

Pop!

The champagne bubbles froth over the bottle.

Bang!

Fireworks explode across the view:

red, white, and blue.

One more time: that "Old Lang Syne,

Cheers!

Happy New Year!

Your resolution?

Contributions, solutions, end to pollutions

Hope!

There is yet hope.

Even here.

Where?

Times Square!

Times Square!!: "What at thrill, what a joy! I'm still a boy! How good it is to be here on this New Year's of New Years ... getting drunk, drinking wine and beer. It's happy times galore! Hell! It's nineteen eighty four! Finally, it comes! It's just one more year!"


"You know what I mean. Come on! It's your New Year's day?"

"What?"

"So! What? It's just another year: one more time pray; one more New Year's Day."

"I don't quite understand."

"It's just one more year!"

"Not just any year, you know. It's 1984, one nine eight four."

Yea: four digits. That's all: four digits.

"But, you forget ..."

Out of one thousand, nine hundred eighty four New Year's days, why is this New Year's day different from any other New Year's day?

"Because ..."


No more.

"Yes, but ..."

And he wrote a book. Men do that, you know. So it goes. It's one of the things that separates man from the rest of the animal class. Why is this man -- and his book — different from any other man?

"Easy: it's his views; his predictions."

I can make predictions too: you know.

So it goes.

"His predictions about the future. The future is his present. What a lovely future he saw!"

He saw the future?!?

"You know what I mean. Come on! It screams at you in the face. This place, this world of ours is exactly what he saw."

I beg your pardon.

"He's predicted it to a tee."

For two decades I've been hearing this! Show me the reality of his prediction. "O.K.: freedom. Look at what freexen don't lack."

(These essays note: These essays won $100 first prices in The Tech's "1984" essay contest.)

Guest Column/Fred Massie

1984 is similar to 1984

Orwell's 1984 stimulated our already burgeoning self-righteousness in all matters relating to the Soviet Union. Ironically, an ally by a socialist about the evils of totalitarianism has served as the reinforcer of American anti-communism-socialism-Russiaianism — no difference in the public mind after decades of undeniably-criminating media onslaught. So Russia is Big Brotherism — double-speakimg, not to be trusted — in a presidential word: evil.

When our "antagonist" had been reduced to adorability we could indulge ourselves in an orgy of contempt and dispose of all of the human race in a red garbage bag. And some of us continue to do that in blind disregard of our own shortcomings, in spite of our ten-year perversity in Vietnam, our late awakenings to civil rights, our doctrinaire callousness to those emerging from dictatoral oligarchies (Cuba, Nicaragua, etc.), etc.

"But, you forget ..."

where we stood on the matter of violent actions? Doublethink always keeps 'em guessing (and, as we know, building). Nineteen eighty-four will be the year of minute deployment in Europe. It may, we fervently hope, also be the year when America is persuaded to disarm its extreme mistrust of Russia. By continuing this development costing hundreds of millions, and by simultaneously disrupting the lives of hundreds of millions, all as a means of achieving a reduction of mistrust, we so obviously exhibit the irrationality which we ascribe to others that..."