

Beacon Hill Byline: by Mary Rogeness

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### **The Twenty-First Century**

As the years go by and I grow older, time seems to move faster and events come closer together. My memory recalls the ten-year-old Desert Storm as a recent military action. Even the Reagan years don't seem to be in the distant past. Yet the world celebration that welcomed the twenty-first century stands out as an event that happened much longer ago than twelve months. Light shows at the Eiffel Tower and the Pyramids, London and New York ushered in a busy century in Massachusetts, the nation and the world.

This year began with a replay of the quadrennial presidential primary season. For the first time since 1988 there were contests in both parties. Bill Bradley looked like a strong challenger to Vice President Gore before the voting started, but he was unable to put together a single winning vote tally. Senator John McCain scored big victories over Governor George W. Bush in early primaries, garnering well over half of the votes in Massachusetts. Yet the later primaries gave the nod to the Texas governor. Perhaps the competitiveness of the primaries should have forewarned us about the competitiveness of the eventual presidential election.

On the world scene, Ireland continues its struggle for domestic peace. Israel and the Palestinians continue their attempt to find a resolution to the competing demands of warring groups. Both of the sites are sadly present on any recent year's list of trouble spots. The hope for a new Camp David accord failed last summer.

November's election made news nationally for its indecision, though Massachusetts voted overwhelmingly for the Gore-Lieberman ticket. Our state's voters also gave decisive approval to a state income tax cut. When fully implemented, the proposal will provide taxpayers with a reduction of 15% in their state tax rate. Approval of a separate ballot question makes certain charitable contributions deductible for individual taxpayers.

The Massachusetts tax cut may have made headlines locally, but history will surely remember the year 2000 for the long presidential election. Settled five weeks after election day and after breathtaking reversals of course, the contest gave us President-elect George W. Bush, the same man who was called the winner only hours after the polls closed.

The year ends with daily announcements of high level administration appointments. It ends with many of us still getting to know the nation's new chief executive through the choices he makes. And it ends with our hope that the acrimony of the post-election battles can give way to comity as our nation begins another new year.

As the years go by in this twenty-first century, all of us who lived through the presidential election will tell skeptical youngsters that it actually happened, that the race was so close and the balloting so antiquated that it actually took a month to find out who would be president.