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December 12, 2013

This is a good time of year. Although cold outside, the house is warm and my pantry and freezers are full. I have completed most of the major undertakings of this time of year, and I am able to pick up a book or a neglected newspaper and enjoy a third cup of coffee and a good read. I have located the DVD's I purchased during the year and never found time to watch, and music to really listen to and enjoy. My Christmas guest list is nearly decided and menu choices are also taking shape. Edward, my canine companion, seems content to spend more time indoors especially when it is this cold.

I have especially enjoyed the visits from friends and family during the year. If you were here, thank you. If you were not, it would be great to welcome you at Friendly Forest sometime in 2014.

The winter that began in early October 2012 decided it also liked this country, and it stayed till May 2013. That was a guest many around here were happy to see depart. An early show of warm weather was followed with an abundance of rainfall and a lot of flooding. While my home at Friendly Forest, built into a hillside, is safe from any direct dangers, the pond level rose even more and many roads were washed out. The main highway connection between here and Prince Albert washed out several times and then had a large portion totally under water for all

summer and fall, only re-opening in late fall. That was a real inconvenience and hardship for some, but put into perspective, was nothing like the devastating floods in other parts of the world.

I have had good health, and my injured left foot started to heal and I am able to walk comfortably again. I keep the crutches in view in my home to remind myself of how fortunate I am to have recovered that mobility, and to remind myself how quickly a stupid moment can lead to long term injury and disability. I attribute my general good health to having good medicines to take; the medicine of good food, and the medicines that I have been extracting from plants that grow in this forest land. I continue with the making of tincture extracts, and when they were in season, asked the Yarrow to give of themselves to make an anti-mosquito ointment. It works and I actually like the gentle aroma of the yarrow and beeswax. It also works as a good topical ointment to help disinfect scratches or cuts.

During the winter months I purchased a new canvas tipi cover to replace the old one that no longer had the fabric integrity to withstand bear claws which left long gashes too difficult to



repair. The images of my four animal Spirit Helpers, arranged around the Sacred Hoop, was painted onto the west-facing side of the tipi. It was actually quite a task adding those images with the large canvas inside the limits of my house.

I have been fortunate to have been able to hold Inipi ceremonies each month, and to have good people who came to join me for these special prayer times. By late summer a gravel pit dried up enough so that, with permission from a local R.M., I was able to restock my rock supply for the coming year.

Local artists joined to organize a tour of artists studios. I had 75 visitors that came to see my work at Friendly Forest over the two day tour. Thank you for those visits, the kind things that you said about my work, and the purchases that help me to fund my continuing wood-learning efforts. My philosophy is, and has been; "To sell my old mistakes so that I can afford to make new ones." While that may evoke a smile, there is a basic truth to it. My most recent inventory serial number / count was GR2604 which means that I have made over 2,600 separate wood items since I started keeping track of my work in 1997. That is a lot of sawdust! Artists, like others people, learn from mistakes. I have made many mistakes and I hope that my learning will continue.

You can always see what is happening at Friendly Forest, and images of recent work, by going to the website that I maintain and update too infrequently: www.friendlyforest.ca

If I am frugal and prudent and equipment does not break down, I hope to first of all, replenish a fund intended to cover immediate expenses my executor will have to deal with at my death, and then if possible, to invest in additional new floor tiles in my home. I have gained enough confidence to believe I can do additional floor tile work on my own. Last winter I hired professional help to lay a really great porcelain tile floor for the upper level of my home, and I would like to continue that to the middle level as well. If you visit next summer and it is not done, I either failed to save enough or I chickened out or both of these.

I look forward to another great year here at Friendly Forest, and I invite you to find a way to spend some time with Edward and me during 2014.

I wish you a blessed Christmas season and a truly wonderful New Year!

Gerald and Edward at Friendly Forest