

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

I pray that this letter finds you well and ready to experience the spiritual blessings that our God and Creator sends us this year, as also in every year since the historic birth of our Saviour. The goodness of God is beyond time and is always present to us.

At Friendly Forest the year began with King and Elmo and I sharing this space. In the fall Elmo's former human companion was able to have an improvement in his schedule and so was able to take Elmo back and care of him as he deserved. I miss Elmo, but I am happy that the reunion was able to take place. I cannot say that I detected that King missed Elmo however. He seemed quite content to be the sole beneficiary of my attention and his favourite soft places to sleep around the house. To the best of my knowledge King is 16 years old, going on 17 years. For a dog his size that is ancient. He is nearly totally deaf, is losing some vision and is less active. However, his addiction of marshmallow treats is as strong as ever, and he seems to "require" it as soon as we get up to start a new day. It reminds me of me having to have that first cigarette when I was still addicted to those tobacco products.



Spring and summer (if we really had a spring and summer) saw me building the two air locks / porches onto my home. The experience of doing so affirmed to me how wise it was to build my house when I did and not wait for another 20 years. I would not be capable of doing that kind of work now. I have really enjoyed those bright spaces during the summer and fall, and now that winter has really arrived with minus 38 degrees this morning, the real value of that dead air space at the entrances is very evident. I was able to get some good glass and doors from the Recycle Store in Prince Albert, and that made these projects affordable. Building material costs have really gone up over the past two decades as well! I have also found that with some of the hardwoods that I use to make some of my projects. I need to check current prices of materials before I quote a projected price to a client or I will have to accept the losses as the consequences of my own out-of-date assumptions.

After a glorious September, October arrived with cold and snow ... lots of both. I found one day after Thanksgiving to take down the tipi from Eagle Camp. Instead of storing it out there as I usually did, I hauled it out and slowly dried the canvas in the house. When you try to lay out the canvas for the 18 foot diameter tipi, you come to appreciate how large that canvas is. Strategic folding and unfolding and fan-blown air eventually helped me accomplish the task.

During October, with the miserable weather outside, I began to do some work in the shop. Most of my fall projects involved the lathe. I have made some things that give me satisfaction. I

also have come to realize that my shop skills have evolved to the point where I can conceive of a product and then just step in to bring it about without too much extra planning or concerns about doing it the right way. I will never claim “mastery” of what I do, but I know I am getting better at it. If you want to see some of the items check out my web site (www.friendlyforest.ca, go to FFProducts, and then to Recent Work Gallery 1).



I am happy to be able to continue my spiritual growth and the journey on the Sacred Hoop of this life. God has been very good to me and I always have an abundance of things and people for which I give thanks each morning and evening. I have been able to be faithful to keeping the full moon Inipi schedule and have also led a few more. My Lodge has been available to a few trusted others who needed a facility to lead their own Inipi ceremonies. (I was even able to find a good day in mid October to gather enough rocks for another year of ceremonies. When I ventured into the gravel pit I tried dislodging a few rocks to find them totally frozen into the ground. I started to be discouraged until I discovered that on a north-facing slope, where the sun had been able to shine, the ground was not fully frozen and I was able to gather the rocks I needed. While I was thankful to be able to do this work I wondered how long my body would permit this to be so.

Over the past year I have been able to welcome a lot of visitors and guests to Friendly Forest. Some have been here before and are considered trusted and long-time friends and others are new acquaintances who might also become longer-term friends.

I was able to acquire a moose-antler carving of Eagle from John Giesser of Big River. He is an incredible artist and I am very happy that he was willing to sell me that piece at a price I could afford. At Christmas this month I will also be welcoming a special painting which depicts many of the elements of life on the Sacred Hoop. I will need to make a place for this work but it reminds me that this house has little wall space that is not filled with cupboards and windows, and lacking interior walls for the most part, I am limited in what I can place on a wall to be enjoyed. Two years ago when I acquired “Lament”, an oil painting by Rigmor Clarke, I had to build a portable wall to display the large piece. That is no longer an option for additional works.



The northern hemisphere experiences the return of light as days lengthen. We celebrate this renewal of hope and use it to remember the Incarnation, the source of hope for confused and damaged humanity. The coming of Our Lord to the world will not mean much unless we allow our God to enter the place our God most wants to impact, the human heart. Only we can deny the return of light. Only we can allow the return of hope to our world. May we receive the Light and, in turn, be a Light to others.

