

**Gerald Regnitter at Friendly Forest, Box 501, Christopher Lake, Saskatchewan, S0J 0N0**

December 11, 2008

This morning the thermometer registers a chilly - 27 degrees, and I have just come into a warm house after filling the woodbox and doing some other chores outside in preparation for things later in the day. I guess I can't postpone the idea of winter any longer. With winter and more slack time for me at Friendly Forest, I need to sit down to write to you and to let you know that I am alive and well.

I have had a good year with good food, good friends, good health, and a wonderful environment in which to enjoy all of it. Not that everything was always wonderful, I admit.

My garden that was showing so much promise sort of ended abruptly with a hail storm that pounded buildings and earth with 2 and 3 inch ice balls and then a continuing barrage of one inch stuff that remained in piles even 6 hours later. With the resulting damage to my greenhouse and to the outdoor garden I resolved to repair the greenhouse and to rely on it more next year than this year.

Mosquitoes were bad early on and then with late July they seem to have disappeared for the rest of the season. It was so good we nearly forgot that there are such creatures to spoil the good times of our year.

There was a time in February and March where I attended 8 funerals in 6 weeks. One was for my old friend Bob King who died in mid February from his advanced Parkinson's disease. I was privileged to be with him during his final night and as he passed away the next morning. The staff at Mont St. Joseph Home were really great.

I also lost a good friend and fellow traveller a few weeks later. She left behind her husband and three sons and many good memories of a great person.

A few months later the family honoured me by asking me to participate in an ash-spreading ceremony in the forest. In addition to trying to help the family in this process I was also asked to lead a funeral Service for another friend and was asked to use both Christian and Traditional Native prayer elements in the service. And later to lead another Service for a man from our neighbourhood. It is troubling to me that our established churches do not seem to have enough connection with Metis culture to have created an appropriate Service, and that, more and more, people seek to say goodbye to family members and friends without the involvement of clergy. I think this says more about our churches than it does about anything else.

I had reached the point where when asked what I was doing, I would reply; "I have been going to many funerals, but the good news is that none of them were mine."

I was able to host a group of 10 Korean nursing students and have them spend a night at Eagle Camp. Our scripture study group met at my house for a few weeks in the Spring and we had our final pot-luck meal here as well. There were many happy gatherings of friends here over the year. I am always pleased to see how well my friends get on with each other even if they have never met each other before. This fall I was asked to accept a new four-legged friend to our Friendly Forest pack. Elmo was alone too much of the time and King and I were happy to welcome him to our pack. Now there are three old dogs living under this roof, each of us with distinct personalities. Other than an occasional growl from King to reassert his pack position, all is going well. It does mean that I have to do a lot more house-cleaning. I have even surrendered to the situation and taken my area rugs off the floor so that it is easier to keep things clean.

My wood work underwent a shift this year. I had a series of large custom projects to complete. I am happy with the results. One of these undertakings also enabled me to obtain a large landscape painting by my friend Rigmor Clarke. Although I still owe her a lot for this, I now enjoy the constant presence of the painting "Lament". If you know my house, you know that I have few walls and those that I do have are filled by windows, doors and cabinets. I had no where to properly display this painting. To resolve the

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problem I constructed a wall, bolted it to a heavy cart on wheels, added storage cabinets to the cart to give it more weight and functionality, and then hung the painting on the other side, creating a wonderful separation between my living space and my work area on the north end of the house. If you have not seen it yet, it is worth a visit here to see this painting.

In the Spring I was asked to submit ideas for a set of furniture to equip the Chapel at the renovated St. Mary High School in Prince Albert. My ideas were accepted and a good part of my summer was taken up creating this furniture. I was happy with the outcome. To facilitate the decision process that involved a committee, I created a web page to communicate the ideas and to invite feedback. The process worked well. I have also used this same method to consult with other clients about custom work or work in progress. I need to do more work to update and upgrade my website, and hope to do that this winter. Over the summer I became increasingly paranoid about the survival of my old computer, and with my firm distaste for all things from Microsoft Inc., I switched to Apple, getting a new iMac with a good screen and good capacity. With the help of a very competent IT guy, Mike Alford, I got a Virtual Machine installed so that I can run a Windows XP with all of my old software from my new iMac. That was a deciding factor for me as I debated the pros and cons of this switch. I am glad that I made the switch.

I post updates on my website ( [www.friendlyforest.ca](http://www.friendlyforest.ca) ) on a sporadic basis. Check "Gerald's Page" to see what is happening throughout the year.)

I am usually home and am always happy to welcome friends to share food, conversation and the beauty of the space in which I am able to live. Know that I care about you and keep you in my prayers, as I ask you to do for me.

