

## Bill Rea ? Holidays done for another year

The recent holidays that we all just got through can be a time that stirs up lots of various feelings, ideas and emotions. There is, of course, the festive side of things, and I experienced lots of that over those couple of weeks. I received several books, and I was having trouble deciding which one to get into first. And there were lots of greetings and partying going on. I'm not the party animal I used to be (in fact, I never was much of a social butterfly), but I can still sometimes rise to the occasion.

There were the hectic aspects, and my wife and I learned a lot about them. Beth and I hosted two family gatherings within 24 hours, and we somehow got through it, although we had lots of food left over (I wish I liked vegetarian lasagna more than I do).

We even got to do some travelling. Beth and I spent a couple of days up in Muskoka between Christmas and the first couple of days of the New Year, basically doing little more than reading or sleeping, and after all we had done in the days leading up to the trip, I think we deserved that. It's amazing how appealing the prospect of an afternoon nap can be. I don't know if that's a function of my advancing age, or natural laziness.

We drove up Sunday afternoon (two days after Christmas) leaving the green grass of home for the similar green grass up north. ?There's not a flake of snow on the ground, or a trace of ice on the lake,? I emailed to relatives and others back home shortly after our arrival.

We, of course, knew things were not likely to stay that way. We woke up Tuesday morning to find some of the white stuff on the ground; not a lot, but enough to make driving little interesting (owing to mechanical issues, we weren't able to take my car, which has winter tires, north with us). And the snow kept coming, at a reasonably slow but steady pace, for the next couple of days.

And then came Thursday night. Beth and I woke up New Year's morning to find Nature had dumped an addition 10 centimetres (my estimate) on top of what was already there. It was also the day we had to drive home, so I was urging Beth, with all the persuasive force I'd dare use, to speed up with the packing, so we could be on our way before the roads had time to get any worse.

It wasn't a fun drive south. The roads were very slippery, and we passed a couple of cars that had ended up in ditches (no prizes for guessing how). I drove very conservatively, since it was my wife's car, which meant not very fast. I was both amused and disgusted with the way some drivers roared by us in those conditions. The fact was I could feel that I didn't have a lot of traction, and there was no way I was going to take foolish chances.

The condition of the road improved just before we got to Barrie, so travel time was only about half an hour more than usual.

We got home without ending up parked in a ditch.

There were other matters that had to be dealt with over the holidays.

I sent out a bunch of emailed greetings New Year's Day, and got quite a few replies. One was disturbing, as I learned a family member in Ireland has been quite ill. One of the difficult realities of life, that can rise up even at the happiest times of the year. But as the holidays have come to an end, it means a return to the routines of life.

For many of us, there was a lot of cleaning up to do after all the guests had departed. Somewhat to my astonishment, that wasn't a big deal for Beth and myself, despite all the entertaining we did so quickly. Indeed, things were pretty well back to normal within two hours of the final goodbyes. We probably would have completed the task a lot sooner if I hadn't paused as often as I did to pick at some of the leftovers.

Considering we moved into our house in July, and still haven't completely unpacked (we have several rooms piled with stuff that we're still trying to find places for), there are some spots in the abode that haven't looked this good in months. There's still a lot of work to do.

It's also time for households to start setting their plans and priorities for the coming year. Some years, those plans actually work out. For example, Beth and I knew for more than a year that a move was in our future, so a year ago, we resolved we would get it done in 2015, and we did.

As we all know, plans made like that don't always see completion according to schedule.

Another thing that has to be done is setting a household budget for the year. Yes, Beth and I set one every year (more accurately, I set it and Beth lets me pretend that I actually carry some clout around here).

I haven't done it yet. In fact, I should have been using the time I devoted to this writing to dealing with budget issues. I believe the concept is known as procrastinating. Don't worry, I'll get to it.

So the holidays have come and gone for another year.

All the traditional visiting and correspondence has been taken care of. The Christmas cards have been removed from the various tables on which they had been placed.

The decorations have been put away. Beth took care of that, since she knows where everything spends the other 11 months of the

year.

The traditional feasts are done for another year, and the leftovers have just about been consumed. The good part is I am not likely to be pressed into turkey-carving service for some time. I understand why my father always dreaded that task.

Beth even found some Christmas music Jan.2 on TV. At the risk of sounding like Scrooge, I do hope that's the last of it, at least for a while.

And we are all back to our non-holiday-season routines.

Like everyone else, I enjoy the occasional break from the routine. That's why I make a point of getting away for a week every August. But I also have a hard time relaxing when I'm not working. I wonder if I'll ever be able to retire.

The down time was nice, but it's now time to get back at it. The truth is I couldn't wait

