

I wonder if people just like to complain, or if they really do not like winter. I am sitting in our warm little cabin contemplating this and other minor issues. It is already dark at six p.m., and I just came from the barn. Runo is still out in the winter evening, feeding sheep on clean snow.

The pups were waiting for me when I came into the yard. As yet, they are confined to our fenced yard when they are not with us. At a little less than five months of age, we don't trust them to stay at home. Blue was sitting in the stone walled flower bed where she could put her front paws up on the top ends of the boards of the fence and watch for my arrival. Kate, chubbier and a little less agile, was waiting just inside the gate.

I opened the door for them, and they hurried in. I went to the wood shed and picked up a few chunks of wood and then went around to the basement door and entered there. I put some wood on the fire, took off my jacket and boots, and walked across the basement to the stairway. At the top of the stairs, I saw two little border collie faces, looking down, waiting for me. With a pan of puppy chow in my hand, I joined them and filled their dishes.

Our balsam fir Christmas tree stands between the old yellow-painted sideboard and the pine chest where I keep my knitting, felting, and weaving supplies. It is a slim tree and fits perfectly in that narrow gap. A paper mache angel holding a little lamb, made years ago by an area artist, tops the tree. There are blue and silver ornaments and silver tinsel on the tree, and little blue lights illuminate it. Looking out the window above the chest, the icicles on the shed roof sparkle in the glow of the outside light I turned on for Runo.

Here by the wooden grate that lets heat rise from our basement stove, it is warm and cozy. The bookcases are filled with volumes of all kind. The classical music station at Interlochen is back on the air after a lengthy absence due to changes in their antenna. We have courses from the Teaching Company that we can use with this little Mac laptop I am using right now. Botany, geology, Spanish, linguistics, math—learning is at our fingertips. Board games and yahtze, Runo's lap held electronic chess set are also available for us.

Soon, if we get a little thaw followed by some colder weather, there will be a good base for skiing and snowshoeing. So, whatever the weather, we have both entertainment and education available to us.

Still, people complain about winter. It seems to me that as long as we have warm clothes, plenty of food, and a warm house, winter is the perfect antidote to a summer filled with dawn to dusk labor, heightened activity, more people, and more responsibilities.

It is true that a livestock farm entails year round work and responsibility. Yet, winters seem less stressful. Feed is stored for the animals. Food for us is in freezers, fruit cellar, and root cellar, and we have time to enjoy the long winter evenings. Now, in December, we find

peace in life in our cabin. I watch the Christmas tree and reflect on our day. When snow is piling up outside, I give myself permission to just “be.”

