

Once in a while, I like to look back to see what I might have noted on the same day in other years. Sometimes, I find nothing that surprises me or is of any interest. But, I never know. So, this sunny morning of March 18 that looks like a good day for the maple sap to run, I am taking a look through my journals from the past few years to see if anything of particular interest occurred.

March 18, 2007 was a Sunday, like today. But, it appears that we had experienced some warmer weather along the line, because I noted that I went to the greenhouse, chopped off the old spinach—that had survived the winter, unlike this year—cut some claytonia for a salad. It was a sunny day, eight degrees Fahrenheit in the morning, but mild later on.

On this day in 2009, I managed to scratch around in the frozen ground and extract a few parsnips, but it wasn't an easy job.

March 18, 2011—We walked the fence line to the northwest corner of the neighbor's yard and then east to the road and north to the Lee corner, then back west to the bee yard. A big snowdrift stopped our progress, but we hooked up the power to what we could.

March 18, 2012—It was an unseasonably warm day. The thermometer read forty degrees Fahrenheit when we went to the barn in the morning and warmed up considerably after that. We sheared a few sheep today.

On this day in 2013, it was NOT unseasonably warm. The temperature was nine degrees Fahrenheit, but it was the bitter wind that made it feel so chilly. It began to snow in the evening.

March 18, 2014—We began to dig the snow and ice away from the sheep feeders where we had stored them for the winter. We worked all afternoon, and we finally got most of them loose without breaking too much. Runo spent the rest of the day—all evening—plowing and blowing snow to try to get an opening in a gateway we need to have open before we bring in the flock for shearing and lambing.

On March 18th in 2015 we boiled sap from our “backyard trees” and cooked down syrup. We are also cooking sap in the family saphouse. The sap is running well. As one of our old neighbors used to say, it “broke loose.”

March 18th, 2016—We sheared the next to the last pen of sheep. Two were big rams that Runo sheared. After our noon meal, I went to Reading Group. That is always a highlight of the week.

Last year on this day, we sheared the last pen of ewes. We came in at noon and ate pork chops and sauerkraut, then went back and sheared the rams. Good to have the job finished for another year.

Then, there is this day that is well underway. We are going to meet friends for lunch at an area café and then come home and have a little Sunday afternoon break. As I looked back over my journal entries for this day in years past, I realize how much “creatures of habit” we really are. Or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that the rhythm of the

seasons determines to a great extent how we spend our days. March is maple syrup month, sheep shearing month, seed planting month, and the time of year we are surprised by the first killdeer, the first redwing blackbird, the sandhill cranes' arrival, and by the hints of a new season to come. Hopefully, before lambing gets underway, there will be time for a good cleaning of the cabin. That has been neglected the past couple of weeks, and it is as necessary to our wellbeing as the meals we eat and the work we do.

