

Sometimes, it seems to me that time is shaped like an arrow. At certain seasons of the year, it resembles an acute triangle that has one angle reaching out into the future. Meanwhile, the side that the triangle is resting on is quiet and steady. Part of the winter season seems like this, the daily chores and activities moving along quietly, and much the same day after day. But, then, sometime along the end of February or the beginning of March, there is an acceleration, and focus is directed ahead, all activities more and more closely aligned as the winter/spring narrows to that arrow-like angle. And there, alignment of activities gives way to a jumble of more tasks that have to be accomplished than there is time to do them.

We tapped our backyard trees yesterday—20 spiles were, surprisingly, dripping sap as we did that job, though it was scarcely above freezing. Runo was also making lambing pens and trying to get ready for sheep shearing. We were busy with daily chores, too, those that don't change from day to day, regardless of the other seasonal jobs that take so much time.

These periods of extra activity shouldn't surprise us. They come every year at this same time. And, at other seasons of the year, similar responsibilities create the same situation. And yet, it always seems a surprise that there is so much to do and so little time to accomplish it.

And yet, I don't think there is any potentially leisurely life that would be preferable to the way we spend our time now. The sense of accomplishment—often of relief—when we have all the sheep shorn, or when the bottom shelf of the fruit cellar is lined with jars of maple syrup, or when lambs are all born, docked, vaccinated, and sent with their mothers to the green pastures of spring—that is something that makes it worthwhile. And, sometimes, there is even a little time to relax before the garden needs planting, hayfields need mowing, and another season's cream is ready for the butter churn.