

Chores.

Many people, including me many years ago, don't realize how many chores come with living, especially alone, in the country. I quickly learned to adapt. I was younger and much stronger physically, so the change from having lived in the city most of my adult life was not difficult, but there was a steep learning curve. When you can't get out to a store to get food or supplies because there's four feet of snow on the ground, all the roads are closed, and the nearest town is twenty-five miles away, planning becomes everything.

I moved to the cabin I had purchased fifteen years prior and decided to live there full-time. The daily living requirements and chores became a juggling act because, as a writer, I wanted my time focused on my writing as much as possible. But undone chores began to weigh on my mind and needed to be dealt with sooner or later. Doing it later became my usual decision. I tried hiring house cleaners and yard maintenance people, but that didn't work for me. Finally, I decided on a plan: I would write in the mornings until whenever and then do my chores. This plan worked well. I planted a vegetable garden and installed an automatic drip system to water it. I was then able to attend to my other chores while watching my garden grow.

A massive forest fire burned through here several years ago, and as it went by, it was nearly half a million acres. I stayed despite the mandatory evacuation notices, and soon, all the roads were closed due to the fire, so my vegetable garden came in very handy that year.

The yearly chores are many, but by far the biggest chore is splitting and stacking firewood for the upcoming winter. I purchase rounds, which are tree trunks cut into sixteen-inch lengths and hauled here and dumped. I then use a gas-powered log splitter to split the rounds into pieces that fit into my cast iron wood stove. I then stack all those pieces into neat rows and cover them with

tarps to stay dry during the long, snow-covered winter. The rows of split wood are also home to pine squirrels and chipmunks during the long winter.

This year, I took time off from writing my blog to attend to splitting and stacking about half the firewood I will need this winter. I also tended to and planted my vegetable garden and reinstalled the irrigation system, which must be removed each autumn so it doesn't freeze and burst the pipes during the freezing winter.

Now it's time to let my body heal from the physical labor I am not used to. My hands and a shoulder ache from lifting the heavy rounds to split them and stacking the large piles of split logs. I like working, but it might not be too many years before I buy my firewood split instead of in rounds and maybe even start paying someone to stack it.

Today is my first day back at my computer, and I must admit I do feel comfortable sitting here. My garden is another place where I am very comfortable, so I hope to enjoy both pursuits for many more years.

The allure of living here is the solitude and quiet, the wildlife and the beauty of hiking the mountains and fishing or swimming in the lake.

Written by Peter Skeels © 5-16-2024