

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Getting Ready ... Again!

By Kathryn Wishlow

Lately most of my friends and family have shared their individual progression towards preparing for another winter season. The recent conversations have included the usual weather small talk, followed by the upcoming appointments for getting the snow tires on. I just had mine done last week ... later than other years, but the unusually warm weather this fall encouraged my procrastination.

I also have been dragging my feet when it comes to stashing away Christmas gifts for family, friends and my staff. For some reason, this year is one of the rare time I have not finished before the first snow flies. I have even been known to pick up unique items for people while away on my summer vacation. But, not this year! Of course, my trip west had to be cut short just north of Sault Ste. Marie because of a health challenge, and the Jasper fires. Gifts for others became farthest from my mind.

Finally, I made it a point to write down my list of names two weeks ago. That felt good! Beside each name, I would add possible ideas to watch for in case they went on sale. I love to get people awesome things for much less than ordinary retail. That always feels like a "win-win" to me! Best of all, is the feeling I get when *everyone* has a few ideas listed beside their name

just in case a choice is not available. For me, the planning is harder than the actual purchasing.

My kids keep telling me to go on Amazon and choose what I want and just have it delivered. That's easy for them to say. They have done it like that for years. But I come from the "I need to touch it, examine it carefully for flaws, and know that the quality is giving me good value for my money" generation. We had much less variety to choose from. I know that I am not alone in this thinking. Yes, it does take much more time and effort. However, I feel that all of my people on the list are worth it.

For example, my daughter once purchased on line, a beautiful warm, green, alpaca sweater. She had it delivered to me. I loved it! I immediately pulled it on over my head and then found one sleeve was almost two inches shorter than the other. Not wanting to disappoint her, I told her how much I loved it, and wondered if it came in any other colours. There were only a few left in stock, so she also sent me a brown one. It fit beautifully, so that is the one I wear out and about. The green one is an "at home only" sweater, unable to be returned since there were none left in stock and it was not replaceable. Shopping in person can spot flaws.

Then there was the Sunday I received a strange call from our post office, begging me to come and pick up all of my parcels. I was not expecting anything, but was curious and went. It turned out my daughter had anticipated a busy travel year for everyone in our family. So, she had ordered on line during a "black Friday" sale, these huge luggage sets for each of us for Christmas. Three different sizes for each person meant twelve boxes. No wonder the post office was having issues! They took up so much room, it took me two trips to bring them home.

It looks like I will be doing a couple of trips to pick up the items I now have on my list in the next week or two. I hope the decent weather holds. The last time I took action so late, we were in a "recession" and retailers were slashing prices to entice shoppers to buy. My budget was more than enough to finish my list, and I did some impulse shopping for everyone and had even more fun. That was a very abundant Christmas! Maybe I will get lucky ... again?

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to WhitePine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who support and encourage all facets of writing and publishing literary efforts. Follow them on Facebook or www.whitepinewriters.ca)