Fall Clean up is Really Big Fun

The weekend is over, alas, and I'm at my home computer, which, as my readers know, has a great view of the wood pile nestled beneath a stand of giant junipers. Usually the puppies are digging around in there hunting down who knows what — mice, packrats, squirrels, snakes, bunnies and birds — yes, birds also gather there, even the drunken robins when they aren't committing hari-kari against the living room windows. Actually, there is a big, red, seedy coyote poop in view, as well. Lots of goings-on at the woodpile. If it weren't for my predator "terrierists" and coyotes, the woodpile would be a nice, safe place to hang out. But you should see how fast those little dogs can move logs around, or disappear into the midst of them with only wagging tails in view. But at the moment the pups are lounging in their Equipale Mexican chairs next to Mom (that's me) while she writes. It's an extraordinarily busy time for them — especially Dilly Tres, who has probably developed the strongest tail muscles in the western world. He stands under the cottonwood wagging fast and furiously, awaiting a breeze to bring down a leaf or two. Then he bounds after the leaf. If twenty-five or so leaves come down at once, he simply races in all directions skidding to a stop, reversing directions and sending up a marvelous spray of dust like we skiers do with powder snow. (We won't comment here on what Dilly Tres' activity means for housekeeping.)

Ariel, Dilly Tres, Izzie, Gabriel, Dilly Dos.

It was a great, warm, delicious fall weekend. Our friends, the "Nifs", were here. The kids picked up fallen branches and twigs from around about the cottonwood tree, pruned the Autumn Sage and Russian Sage, the Seedum, Salvia, and other perennials. We could see the new little plants, well-formed and tiny, below the old ones, ready to burst come April or so. We cut, bagged, swept, hauled, washed windows, made repairs, and also had plenty of time to relax on the swing in the sun. Three wonderful kids with two friendly pups swinging by the closed pool, watching the colors begin to accent the contours of the Sandias as this great day wound down.

Then Dick gave kiva fire-starting-and-maintenance lessons. Dick prides himself as a master fire-builder. I don't get much credit for having heated my house in New Hampshire with wood for over twenty years way back when. This is a kid (me, that is) who knows how to build a fire, but nevermind. He has soared beyond me in the last twenty-five years in New Mexico, where we have a fire in the kiva every cool night. Sometimes we pull the piano bench in front of the living room fireplace, pop a table cloth on top and the soup, and just cuddle up there at dinner time. We actually have four chairs there so the pups can be well-accommodated next to us, rather than in our laps lapping soup. Must be a pretty ridiculous picture. But it's divine. Other nights we eat at the table in the sunroom with the sunroom kiva ablaze. That's what we did this fall clean-up Saturday. There were eight humans at the table eating pizza, two pups asleep on the wing chairs, and a nice, cozy fire. Afterwards, we played a great round or two of our favorite dice game, Sausalito 5000. Gabriel was snapping his fingers, rocking to his own tune, blowing on the dice. Ariel was studious in her approach, zeroing in on the wished-for result and often getting it — two straights, I believe. Izzie concentrated hard, weighed all the possibilities carefully, and stuck with a very serious, thoughtful, conservative approach. The two Moms, Tanya and I, went for the more risk-taking moves, which didn't exactly work. Jim had moderate success. Dick required the score be called out every round so he could know exactly where he was, or to make sure he was still ahead—which he wasn't most of the time. Very suddenly and simultaneously, Dick and Lucy felt the need for match-sticks to hold open their eyes. Dick said "I'm finished—going to bed." The kids, wide awake and bouncy, went home; the pups went out for the last rounds of the property, getting our nighttime protection in order; and then we all snuggled down. A great day — *zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.* ■

P.S. Call me if you want to learn Sausalito 5000, build a fire in your kiva or need real estate advice. Or just call me!

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