

We really cannot believe that we have been in Canada for 18 months. The time has certainly flown by and we have seen a full circle of seasons. Out of the four Autumn was by far the most spectacular. Colours here are far more intense than in S Africa. I believe it has something to do with sugar content. The golds are golder, yellows yellower, reds incredibly red and bronze intense. It looks as if an artist has painted with a gay abandonment, using all the colours on his palette at random. It is not uncommon to see half a tree in full green dress, the other half a vivid red, as if it couldn't make up its mind which to sport to the fancy dress. Autumn was really the season of colour.

Winter has moved up gradually and as I'm writing snow flakes are spiralling down gently and tantalizingly. Their shapes are incredible and perfect as they fall onto the glass panes. You wonder if the fall will be a heavy coating or just a light sprinkling of white here and there. The boys would be ecstatic with a heavy snowfall as they could go and ski. This is the best as far as they are concerned and they prefer the crispness of winter combined with the excitement of skiing, to the summer months. Paul, Adina and I have gone in for cross-country skiing but this winter Adina will do downhill. The two oldies still have to pluck up courage.

We have only one reservation about winter and that is the driving. Actually I'm the one that is neurotic. It is an ugh!! feeling to drive and suddenly you hit ice and there is just nothing you can do and your car just goes and spins and all the etc., with it. You close your eyes tight and wait for it to stop and hope you wont feel the bang as someone bumps into you. Believe me it has happened this winter. The cold hasn't been a problem and neither has the snow, but the ice is a different story.

While I'm typing and the snow flakes are falling I find it difficult to believe that you are all basking in the glorious sunshine. This time of year is so pretty here as everyone has the Christmas spirit and they are all trying to out do one another with their Christmas decor. The decor is extended to the gardens as well. What could be more inviting than the conifers with their gently drooping branches, dressed in their winter white mantle of snow. The twinkling lights in different colours draped over them, are their accessories, adding the touch of class and warmth to their Christmas greeting. The lights are extended around the windows as well and father Christmas is really made to feel very welcome indeed. - Canada is a very ethnic community and each group does something a little special and different.

The area where we live has also undergone a radical change since we have been here. It now has a personality with roads that are tree lined and fields that were once empty sporting shopping complexes and indoor sporting facilities. We almost feel like pioneers of this area. People here don't believe in living in one spot. As soon as they start climbing the ladder of success they move up to more prestigious areas bigger homes etc., so that you really get a lot of mobility in an area with people coming and going. We find this very strange. You ask someone if they are going to establish a garden and they tell you no, as they may be moving in two years time. Talking about gardens we have got ours going and even ventured to plant bulbs. It felt so exotic when we planted tulips in different varieties and colours, ctocuses, daffodils, snowdrops etc., We decided to plant them according to the book and put in bonemeal with each bulb. We didn't take into account the dogs love of bonemeal. You can imagine our horror when we discovered our bulbs scattered over the whole garden.

It was always the coldest day when they went on their digging rampage, and needless to say they did it on a number of occasions. If we get flowers it will be a miracle.

Since I started this letter Christmas has come and gone, and for that matter so has New Year. Boy! the weather really went crazy and gave us a white Christmas. Christmas day was -22°C with a bitter wind. I bet you that you cannot even visualize that. We were not daunted and dressed up and went cross-country skiing in the park near us. This was our first attempt this season and boy we were stiff. It really was great fun and if we could have skied as well as we looked we would have done great. Paul was off between Christmas and New Year and we had a lovely relaxing time. We didn't drive out to any of the skiing areas because of bad road conditions and went to areas about ten minutes away. New Years day being Brett's birthday we went as a family cross-country skiing. The weather was much warmer and it really was a lovely way of getting out. We arrived home at four and had a late lunch. We topped it off with a black fore cake which I made for Brett. We really felt very home sick over this period. Just missing all the family.