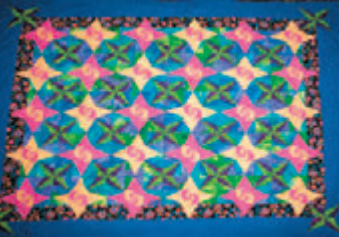


Scenes from '04



Clockwise from top left: Sharon sails by Great Diamond Isle, where we were married; New metal roof at Camp Vanderlips, with Daliesque winter flourish; "Nature Boy"; After 17 issues, NEJG passed from the scene in '04; Clara in Detroit's suburban jungle; the Wellesley house (and much loved screen porch) was sold in '04; Silas' U-9 travel team; His first set of clubs; Really fun Enterprise-Sun reunion in August — seen here, the staff circa 1990; Sharon in Avignon, during our October trip to Provence; Clara turned 6 and her Dad 40 in September; One of Blondie's award-winning quilts... At center: Our Easter family portrait.



Vanderlips 2004: More than a card

Yeah, yeah. So we didn't get our act together in time to issue Christmas/Holiday cards this year. Accordingly, Silas, Clara Sharon and Hal (a.k.a. Team Vanderlips) are instead wishing you a happy, healthy New Year — or perhaps a jolly, joyous Twelfth Night, depending on when we actually post this thing. The "holiday letter", of course, isn't a letter at all. It's a report, and the formulation thereof requires an extra sort of effort — on the senders' part — to combat both its inherent impersonality and the not unreasonable notion that one is acting purely out of guilt (from having already received everyone else's holiday wishes while issuing none). So, bearing all this in mind, read on for a detailed rundown of what went down with the Vanderlips in 2004 — more detailed, surely, and probably more sincere than anything we could have fit onto a mere card.

Let's start with the kids. Clara turned six in September and continues to grab life by the throat. She's our Type A Girl, always bounding about with great energy and volume. In her (admittedly rare) quiet moments she's reading and writing up a storm... She appears born to the stage, our Clara. She enjoys lying on her bed, reciting aloud to herself with great theatricality (current favorite: *The Little Ballerina*). She did a ballet session of her own in Portland this fall, with her friend Louisa, and frequently busts out impromptu interpretive dance routines to any old music (favorite accompaniments of 2004: *The Nutcracker*, naturally, and *Devil Woman* by the immortal Cliff Richard). Santa brought her a puppet theater last week, providing a fancy new venue for her many productions. Every day after school she decompresses from the rigors of first grade by conducting, via her Barbie collection, elaborate dramas in which she plays all the parts... Mrs. Ledger, who taught Silas in Grades 1 and 2 at New Gloucester's Memorial School, will do the same for Clara, who *loves* her teacher.

Silas feels the same way about his teacher, Ms. Gamage. He entered the Dunn School this fall and has done very well with the transition, as a third grader. Silas is beginning to step out a bit, befitting a man of his maturity and accomplishments. He's starting to venture off the property into the surrounding badlands with his neighbor-friend Peter. They'll be riding their bikes "downtown" to the Village Store soon — but not yet! ... He's always been an avid reader but now he's actively choosing for himself, showing a predilection for fantasy and myth (just finished: *The Egypt Game*) ... He played on the Patriot Soccer Club U-9 travel team this fall (Hal coached the boys) ... Silas got his first set of golf clubs this July, when he turned 8; he's a lefty and hits it quite well. He, Hal (and even Clara) got a few nines in together this year, including a couple tri-generational jobs with Gumps... Silas is playing indoor soccer and basketball at the Y this winter, and he may give baseball another go in the spring. (Meanwhile, Clara will venture into T-Ball). Silas is also taking piano lessons; Santa brought him an electronic keyboard which, with all its bells and whistles, appears to have spurred further interest in play/practice. That Santa's a canny dude.

On the pet front, Zelda continues to flabbergast pet science by living on well into her late teens. Brother Scott sadly passed away at Christmas 2003, though it proved a liberating development for the once-skittish former Ms. Sayre. Slowly she has emerged from her shell. She's amazingly friendly now, to everyone, in part due to the domineering Scott's absence, but also to what we presume to be kitty senility. Zelda has plainly forgotten who her enemies are... What's more, she gained two new would-be enemies to treat, warily, as friends in 2004: In June, we picked up two kittens from the pound, a white jobby named Snowflake, and a Scott-lookalike named Stripes. They are loads of fun and have settled in nicely (save a few misplaced pees on the master bedroom rug). While Zelda no longer hisses at

their mere approach, Trajan has assumed the role of mother figure. She snuggles and lounges with them, plays outside with them, even stands idly by as they eat her food from her bowl. She is the most patient, loving dog there ever was. She turns 10 this spring and, despite some arthritis in one leg, appears to be in good health.

Sharon continues to be a growing force for good in the community. She's a church trustee, volunteers in both Clara's and Silas' schools, and began a three-year term on the School Committee this August (she chairs the Finance and District Improvement subcommittees). Lots of work, and meetings, but it's a good fight worth fighting. Hal and the kids enjoy seeing her on the local cable channel; she's clearly the hottest chick in the MSAD 15 administration. When she's not walking the halls of power, she's in the back room sewing and quilting. Sharon has turned out some quite extraordinary, post-modern-style quilts which her friends at the Sewing Network have encouraged her to enter in the annual Maine Quilt Show. How rural! She's also found the time to start painting the kitchen in a Mexican tableau; think dark red below a deep blue chair rail; the same red above but with a yellow sponged in to make orange. Yellow cabinetry. It's a radical change, for the better, and a big job. By Christmas it was about a third finished. Oh, did we mention she painted Silas' room this spring? And built a tree house in June?

Hal has tried to keep pace with his wife on the communitarian and child-reading fronts, but Sharon sets a blistering pace. That said, he began this fall what should be a long run of coaching soccer; he'll resume T-ball duties with Clara's team this spring... Hal's big event of 2004 involved turning 40, Sept. 12. Where has the time gone. Sharon threw a kickin' surprise party to mark the event; the birthday boy dutifully stayed up way too late, indulged way too much and was sick for 10 days... Phillips Golf Media takes up the bulk of Hal's "working" time, and 2004 was a pretty good year, starting slowly but picking up considerably heading into 2005. Meanwhile, he's freelancing actively for Links and Golf magazines. A pet project, *New England Journal of Golf*, sadly fell into oblivion this past year, merging with something new called *GolfStyles Boston* where Hal will serve as senior editor... His competitive soccer career having ended, he's now working on a soccer memoir — just the sort of big writing project that gives him the willies. But it's been great fun and professionally therapeutic, though what will happen to the finished product remains a mystery. (Anyone with fun, obscure anecdotes from Hal's soccer past is encouraged to send them along. Flattering, embarrassing or out-and-out damning, they will be included.)

Golf remains the Vanderlips bread and butter, as Sharon likes to say, and it paved the way for some fun travel this past year. We did a family golf trip to Plymouth, Mass., in late June, while Sharon and Hal visited Provence on assignment for Links in October; props to Grandma and Grampa Vandermay for taking the reins in New Gloucester. We all ventured to Michigan this summer — by car! — and stopped at Niagara Falls on the way. That was cool. We also checked out Matthew & Tracy's new digs (and new son, Brendan) in suburban Detroit... We all attended a reunion of the *Enterprise-Sun* newspaper, where Hal worked in the early 1990s. A great event, hosted by John and Barb Lamontagne in Marblehead, Mass. Never did we think we'd all be hanging around with each other's wives and children so many years on... Also in Massachusetts, one era ended and another began. Hal's parents sold the ancestral home in Wellesley last spring and moved to neighboring Dover. We get down to the new place quite a bit, though it's weird driving past ol' Dover Road. The kids want to stop in and see what it looks like (and play in the giant yew in the side yard). So does Hal, but it's too soon. Maybe in 2005 sometime...