

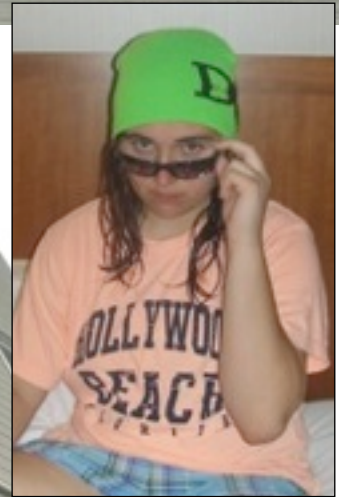
# Vanderlips 2012



When does a trope become a meme? Hoping to avoid the former and resignedly accepting of the latter, we Vanderlips welcome 2013 while asking of 2012, where have you gone? The last year was, as these calendar jobs increasingly are, a blur of joy, conflict, transition, travel, growth, wonder, disappointment and glee. It's hard to parse it all sometimes, but then maybe it's not meant to be parsed — merely recounted (or at least photographed) so we might not lose it forever in the welter of blurs to come.

Thanks to all for their many holiday greetings, most of which have been received here, though some continue to trickle in. We revel in these stragglers. They mitigate the guilt inherent to the New Year's Letter tradition.

We write today from the comfortable, remarkably quiet day



Clockwise from top:  
Glacier National Park;  
Clara vogues nonchalant;  
Dirt Driveway live at  
Guthrie's in ever-hip  
Lewiston; developmentally, we've decided  
Silas, 16, and Brody, 2,  
are comps; Sharon tracks  
down some of her roots,  
in Manhattan, Mont.





care area of the Belfast YMCA, where Silas and Clara are competing on behalf of Twin Cities Swim Club. Clara joined this group in earnest during 2012, dropping time and mingling on the deck with the very nice bunch of kids who partake. Honestly, they are. (I realize this letter has, in the past, tilted toward sarcasm and mock shock. But sometimes the kids truly are nice. Just deal with it.)

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of swim is that, as of Sept. 18, Silas was able to drive he and his sister to practice 3 or 4 weeknights out of 5. We nearly sold the old minivan a couple years back but we're glad that fell through. It performs ably as the Boy navigates to school, the dump, to swim, to the market, perhaps even as part of a caravan into Portland. But for a single unfortunate mailbox on the Woodman Road, all of this has so far proceeded without incident. His license is provisional for 9 months, meaning he can't drive with anyone but family. An annoying but sound statute. We count the days till June.

We try to address the carbon-footprint shame of three cars with our meager commutes. Sharon travels but six miles south on Intervale Road to Pineland, a leafy business campus (that doubles as a killer Nordic ski track in winter) where she continues to enjoy her work at MedTech Media, a healthcare-oriented business publishing concern. They keep asking her to take on more hours, and she keeps fending them off. Just. My commute to the barn dwarfs hers, clocking it at 15 seconds across the driveway (17 if I'm holding coffee), though when you average in the odd trip to Jakarta, these things tend to even out.

The Vanderlips passed a milestone of sorts in August when we put the two kids on plane to the Outer Banks of NC, where they spent a week with my sister and her family. The return trip



Clockwise from top left: Morgan Brann and Clara, as Lazar Wolf, backstage at *Fiddler on the Roof*; Emanuel Phillips, Hal's crossing ancestor (on that side) and great-great grandfather; Easter portrait; a 2012 sampling of Sharon's prayer flags and quilts.





From top left: Silas provides the GNG choir with some bottom; Yellowstone; the kids on Casco Bay; lolling in soft light with the Vandermayns on West Lake, Portage, Mich.; Built to Spill at The State.



included slightly more than your typical travel hell, and poor Janet, proving that no good deed goes unpunished, bore the brunt of it, I'm afraid. But everyone lived through it.

We all traveled together over Spring school vacation to Montana, Seattle and Portland, Oregon — a wonderful trip highlighted on the front end by a visit to the Manhattan, Mont. church over which Sharon's great grandfather presided back in 1906. His picture still figures prominently, and we were minor celebrities the Sunday we barged in and did a creditable job impersonating Christian Reformers ... There was a great deal of driving on this trip but Big Sky country is so comely, we didn't mind it much. We hit such well known but little-seen outposts as Yellowstone, Missoula (great town; Silas had been considering the U of M there until his predilections turned, recently, to warmer climes), Butte, Glacier National Park and Spokane before hitting the big cities of the Pacific Northwest. Great fun.

This was our first full year without Hal's dad, but he

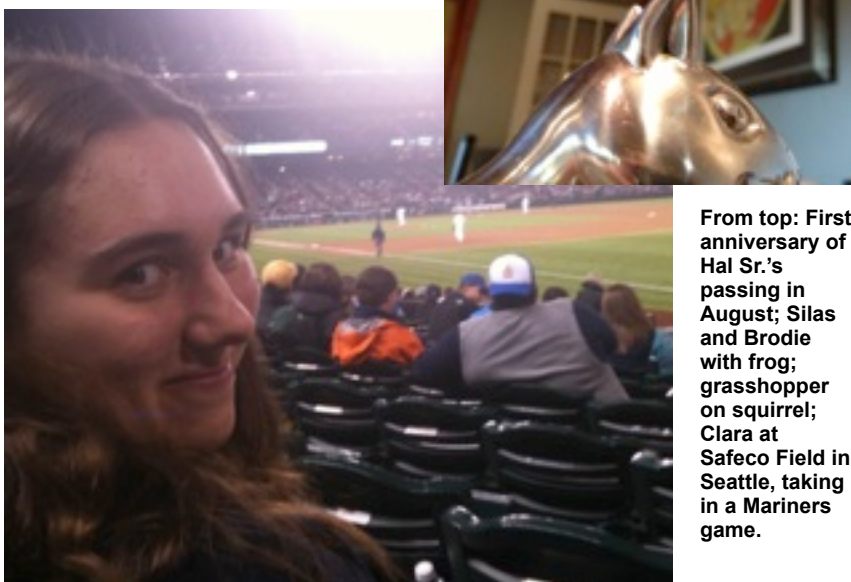


remains very much on everyone’s mind, which is perhaps not remarkable. In August we gathered in Wellesley to see his new memorial bench — on 9 tee at Nehoiden GC, across from our old house. No headstone for the man, at his request. This was and remains his spot ... His wife, Lucy/Luli, is doing very well, plotting a move, traveling, and throwing herself into lots of projects — her editing work but also a family history/genealogy started several years back (she unearthed the vintage picture on page 2). It’s nearly done, or so she says.

Music and drama, but mainly the former, remained a dominant thread through the Vanderlips story in 2012, and so it will no doubt continue. Clara took up the harp, and our den is now home to a Celtic model — not the size of a honkin’ big concert harp, but still one helluva a conversation piece. We’ve all endured (and been responsible for) the bleatings of novice-wielded trumpets, guitars and trombones. But the harp, especially in Clara’s increasingly skilled hands, sounds ethereal and soothing no matter what. For those of us who’d been listening to Cat Stevens all our lives, we’ll never experience “Morning Has Broken” the same again.

It’s a treat having both kids in the same school. Clara’s now a freshman at Gray-New Gloucester HS and has jumped right into a great many things: soccer this fall, softball come spring and band all year, as first (and only) trombone. The recent Christmas concert was quite something: the band performed well and Silas ducked in with three solo moments, one fanfare with his fellow trumpets, another accompanying the chorus on conga (Toto’s “Africa” of all things) and another strumming guitar while two young women sang “White Winter Hymnal” by Fleet Foxes. As per usual, we knew next to none of this would be happening until it did. Thank heaven for iPhones; see a clip [here](#).

Sharon and Hal celebrated 17 years of marriage in October by going to see Lyle Lovett at the Stone Mountain Arts Center in Brownfield, a converted barn that is one of the finest small venues you’ll ever come across. Of course, it sits in such a remote corner of Maine, one is



**From top: First anniversary of Hal Sr.’s passing in August; Silas and Brodie with frog; grasshopper on squirrel; Clara at Safeco Field in Seattle, taking in a Mariners game.**

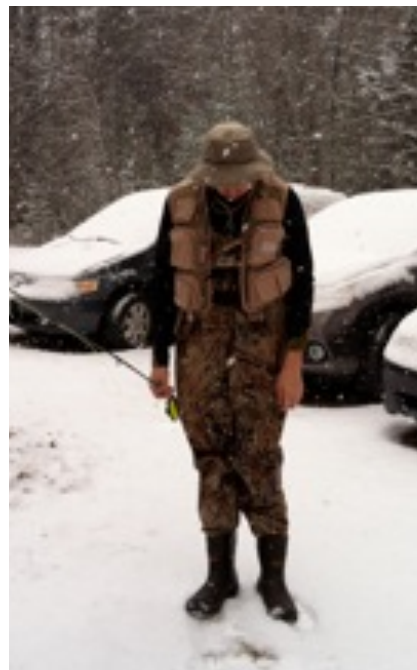
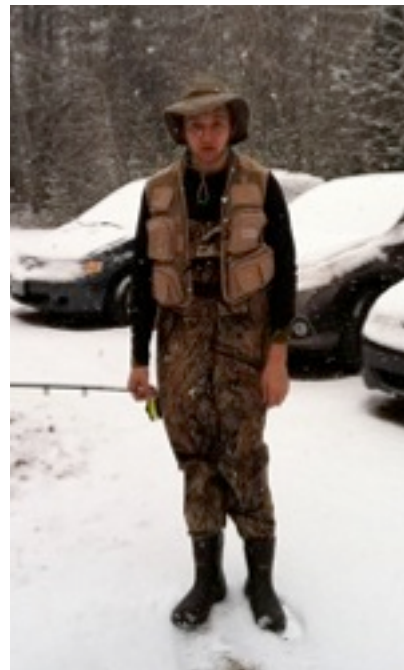




unlikely to come across it, unless you're *trying* to find it (and you've got GPS). In any case, a superb show. Caught Billy Bragg there in June, too... Other performative events of note included Built to Spill in Portland and Band of Horses in Boston, both with Silas; a heady Mountain Avenue reunion show at the Sabbathday Grange in July; the decidedly distaff expedition Sharon and Clara led to Les Miz on Christmas Day; and Clara's triumphant roles as Lazar Wolf in *Fiddler on the Roof* this summer and Joyce the newspaper reporter in the middle school production of *Groovy* last spring... Dirt Driveway made its club debut last February at Guthrie's in Lewiston. When time can be found, we continue to practice and play parties and such... Silas has formed his own band and the best fun (for the rest of us) has been coming up with a suitable moniker. Angry Snowman was the *nom de moment*, but Ghetto Snowman is now the front-runner.



Silas is the part of GNG's guinea-pig class, the first to tackle International Baccalaureate's 2-year diploma program, a curriculum the school qualified to undertake in the spring of 2012. Sort of a big deal for our smallish, semi-rural school system; just two others in Maine have pursued and qualified as an IB World School. Clara will likely follow suit and we're all curious to see how it goes. A lot of credit for bringing IB to GNG goes to Sharon and her colleagues on the School Committee all those years. A nice legacy.



All this school stuff really did get down to brass tacks this past fall with the start of IB, the taking of PSATs and our fledgling college search process. We expect it will only get crazier in the next 12 months, so we resolved to rent a house in Rangeley this winter so as to ski Saddleback and commune together as a unit of four while we can. Still, if you ski, come on up and join us. The George, our cottage overlooking Rangeley Lake, sleeps eight and we've got our mitts on it

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**Clockwise from top: Disc golf in Washington State; Clara and trombone at NG Memorial Day parade & ceremony (water on hand this year, as a kid fainted from heat/standing the year before); fully outfitted at Xmas, our Angling Fiend counts the days till spring; Multnomah Falls, outside the "other Portland".**