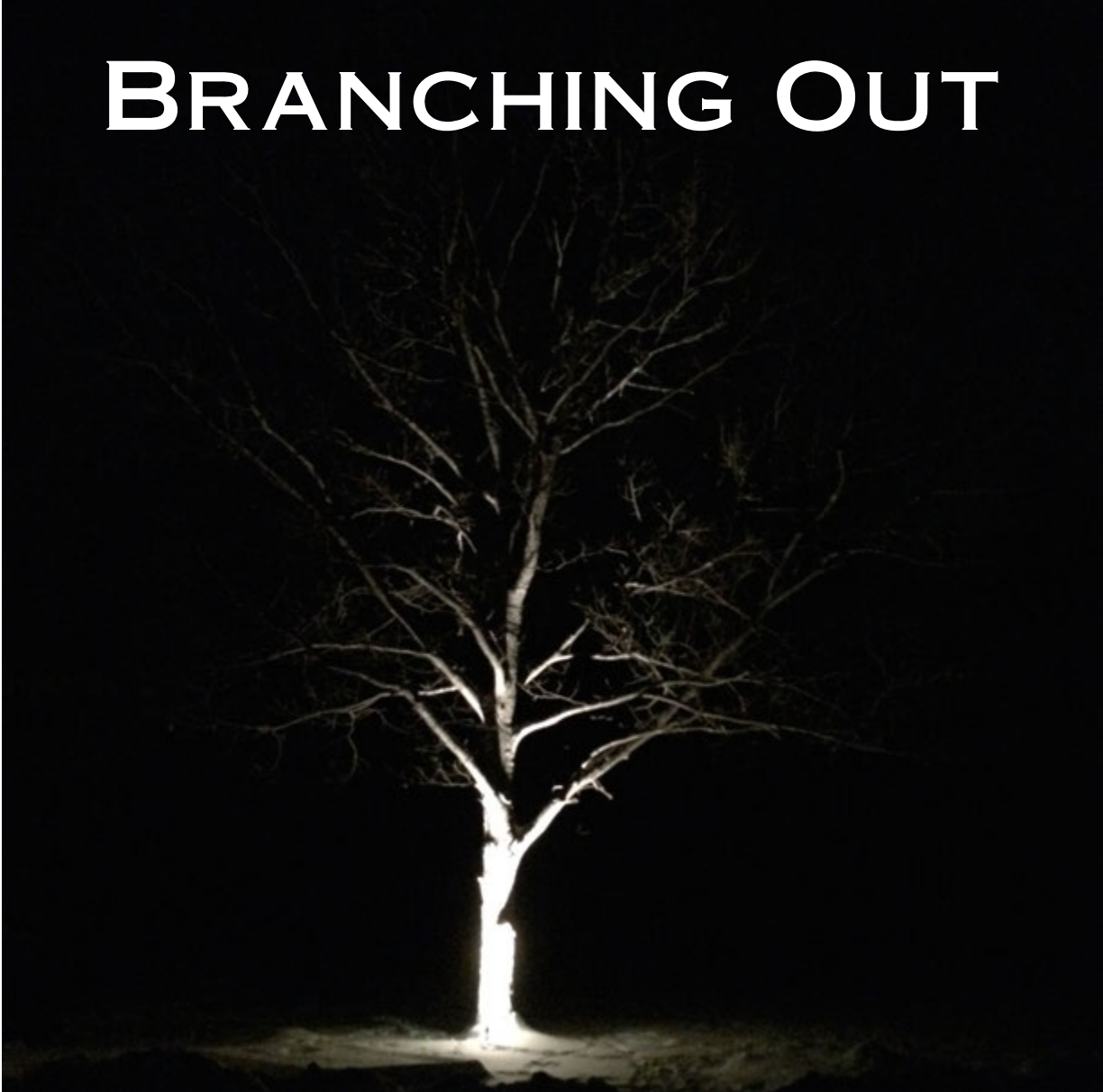


## Hearty New Year's Greetings from The Vanderlips

When we Vanderlips look back on it, 2014 will be viewed as the year when true decentralization took hold. For the two decades Sharon and I have been together (we'll mark our 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in October), we did nothing but add new mammals to the mix and, excepting the sad departures of various dogs, cats and hamsters, we've generally stuck together, using Camp Vanderlips as a home base and refuge. But Silas went off to the University of Montana last August and, when he did (and when Clara got her driver's license this fall), it became clear our once integral family unit had begun unravel.

That makes it sound quite sad. On occasion, it can be exactly that. But it largely remains something between a thrill and a quiet satisfaction to see the chillun fledge their respective wings. And so we look back on 2014 as a pivotal year in the Vanderlips timeline/saga and, having got our heads around that for the time being, we additionally send our best wishes to all of you, for 2015, from a wider variety of places, both physical and mental.

Two thousand and fourteen was nothing if not festive. We marked the Chinese New Year with a massive blowout last winter, and followed that up with an even more ambitious August fete to mark my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. In between, Silas and his cohort of graduating seniors seemed to gather here at Camp Vanderlips, by the fire pit, 5 nights out of 7, all summer long. We expect 2015 to be much, much quieter on the party front.



In every other respect, it's full speed ahead. Clara, now a decidedly grown-up, mobile 16-year-old (big Sweet Sixteen party in September, complete with a piñata, and boys), has made the most of her new-found freedom —

driving herself to swim practice, back and forth to harp lessons, home from drama, off to babysitting gigs, and even into the "big city" of Portland to meet friends (none of these newly licensed girls can drive with each other, of course, not

Clockwise from top: Our effectively lit oak, newly pruned this year, stands winter guard at Camp Vanderlips; Tim Reimensnyder's rendering of a Maine white pine, the likes of which dot the property here (the painting was an Xmas gift from Sharon to Hal and vice versa); Epic 18-foot Christmas tree this year — too tall for star placement!





Clockwise from top left: Silas and Clara after their star turns in GNG's spring performance of "Our Town"; Senior Prom pre-party; Harp Recital in Bath; University of Montana Marching Band; Mooning the White Mountains, in winter.



until the 9-month probationary period has ended). Unfettered use of the minivan (really glad we never sold that thing) also brought with it the honor and privilege of going to the dump. This Clara has also embraced, albeit with clenched teeth. When the unclenching subsides, the gritting takes over, as our girl embarked this past fall on the "no joke" portion of the high school experience, i.e. her junior and senior years. At GNG, that means the two-year International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, a barrage of high-stakes testing, grade curation, extra-curricular hoarding and college visits. Sooner than we know, she'll be off somewhere, too.

Which brings us to the Model Boy — not in the sense that his behavior is necessarily beyond reproach, but rather that Sharon and I basically vetted on him this whole child-rearing thing. Not saying we're done, but last spring Silas managed to fight back the effects of senioritis to not only earn his IB Diploma, but also get himself admitted to nearly all the schools where he applied. After an April visit to our two finalists, Reed College in Oregon and Montana, he settled on the latter — and he appears to have suited himself quite well. Truth is, we honestly don't know shit about the preponderance of what he actually does there. That was a big adjustment on this end — simply not knowing what this kid, our legal ward and housemate for so long, was doing





with himself from moment to moment. We did get a solid, if somewhat gauzy (Grizzly?) glimpse during our October, Parents Weekend visit. Missoula is surely a magical place, not just a kickin' college town but one set against and riven by the mountains and streams that so intrigue our crunchy boy. His quarters are nice, friends seem cool, and we greatly enjoyed the football game, where Silas and the marching band entertained the thousands who invade Missoula from all points every other Saturday. It was also nice to just hang out again, as a foursome.

It was Sharon who escorted our boy to college, in early August. They took a week to hike in Glacier National Park before she settled then left him to his own devices, whereupon she began shaking things up in her own right. We invested this past year in a long-arm quilting machine — an apparatus so impressive and gargantuan, it fills (along with all of Sharon's sewing stuff) the entire den. We did so because she has unflinching, quite reasonable designs on a quilting business, whereby she will use her new machine to "quilt" the quilts of others, in addition to concentrating more on her own sewing/quilting projects. Here's the gist: Apparently, quilters most enjoy the artistry of piecing together the fancy "tops" of quilts. The stitching/joining of these tops with backings (and the sandwiching of warming, fluffy stuff in between) is a drudgery that can take weeks to complete. This is where Studio Quilt-It comes in ([www.studioquiltit.com](http://www.studioquiltit.com)). Accordingly, Sharon spent much of the last half of 2014 networking among Maine quilt groups and getting up to speed on her new machine. All this necessitated the abandonment of her

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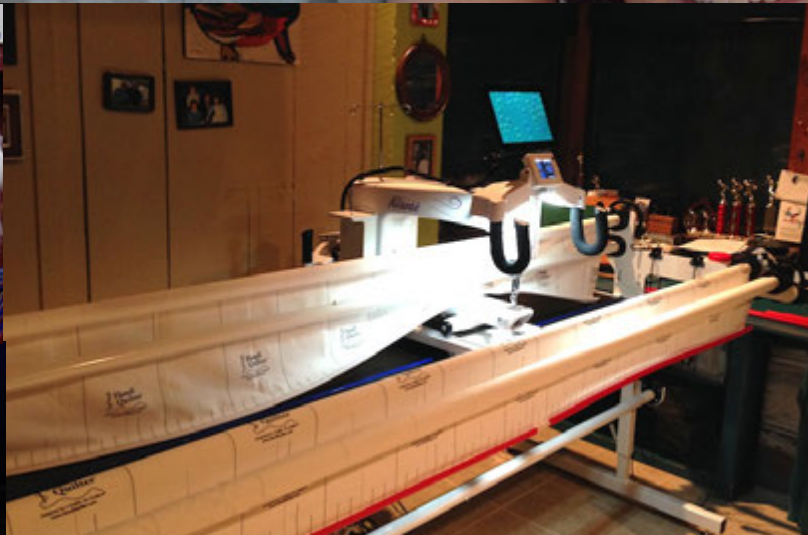
Clockwise from top right: GNG Graduation, June 2014 (images courtesy of [www.tracyphillipsphotography.com](http://www.tracyphillipsphotography.com)); Easter snuggle beside the Mighty Androscoggin; Check out those similar smiles on The Blond Ones, in Missoula; Cousin Valerie Kahla, Clara and Hal on the Portland Waterfront.



full-time gig with HIMSS Media, where she'll continue part-time through spring.

As for me, it was a busy year on multiple fronts. Musically, we seemed to play a gratifyingly large number of gigs during 2014, a fun assortment of weddings, benefits and club shows, mainly with Bald Hill, the string band (see new web presence here, [www.baldhillband.com](http://www.baldhillband.com)). It was mainly parties with the more electric line-up, Dirt Driveway. A combo of both played three epic sets during the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday bash/pig roast this summer — thanks again to all who attended, especially the fabulous Unstables, who traveled north from Boston to ably headline. Mandarin Media continues to thrive (see our new website at [mandarinmedia.net](http://mandarinmedia.net)), Mandarin Digital has a promising new venture in the Digital golf pass, and I managed to make pretty good headway on a book project.

The seminal moment of 2014 may well have come in mid-December, when Silas flew home for Winter Break and we were all reunited after our first experience of extended decentralization. It's quite something to send these kids off into the world. It's similarly humbling to welcome them back, adjusting to their rising levels of adulthood and independence. It's a pattern we're gonna have to get used to, and ultimately embrace, going forward.



Clockwise from top: Vanderlips Family Selfie, taken prior to Silas' Farewell Dinner, Aug. 2014; The vaunted long-arm quilting machine; The Elder Three Vanderlips silhouetted against a Missoula sky; Lounging in some hot springs along the Lewis & Clark Trail, in Idaho; Mountain Avenue reunion set at August birthday bash; Clara inhabits GNG Patriot-ism.