

HAPPY NEW YEAR from all The Vanderlips, furry and otherwise.

As has become custom, please enjoy here snapshots from the year just concluded. The lead image at right is Stevens Brook, which drains off Gloucester Hill a few yards from the southern edge of our property. Hal captured this in December, as Silas and he walked up and over Gloucester Hill to the Nu, one of two craft breweries that opened nearby during 2019. Joining them on that overland adventure was Ms. Persephone, the Bernese mountain dog pup we brought home in August. She is pictured bottom right. Percy, as we call her, has proved a hopelessly adorable addition to the household.

The catch: We had to lose a dog in order to come by this one. Governor Brodie sadly left us in May, the victim of a very fast-moving cancer. Brodie never played that well with other dogs but he loved people. And his ball. He was only 8 years old. (Only last year did we confirm that he was in fact a Glen of Imaal terrier — still a mutt but not the mixed Cairn breed we had presumed all this time.) Several of his basketballs are still arrayed about the yard, now covered with snow. We haven't the heart to discard them.

Just 2 months later, Snowflake, Clara's milky white "sweet baby angel", joined the choir invisible after more than a year battling kidney disease. She was 15. We found a piney, sun-dappled spot in the woods, between the house and the brook, where she is now laid to rest.

Camp Vanderlips is no paradise. It's too fucking cold for that. Sharon has grown quite weary of barn board. The water pump is cacophonous. Our neighbors spent all of September/October logging their land across the brook — sounded like a semi coming down our driveway, all day long...

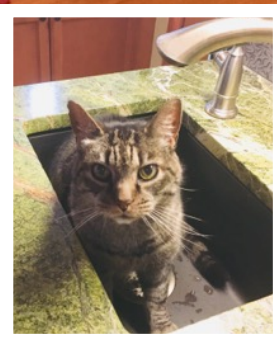
But we do enjoy some relatively unspoilt, wide ranging environs here. As such it's a splendid place to be a cat or a dog (provided the coyotes or hawks don't get you). It's terrible to lose a pet, especially one so young as The Guvnah. But the lives our animals surely lead here softens the blow. A bit. Indeed, it occurred to us while fording it last month that our cats and dogs know this handsome creek, this wooded piece of former blueberry barren, as well if not better than any of us humans.





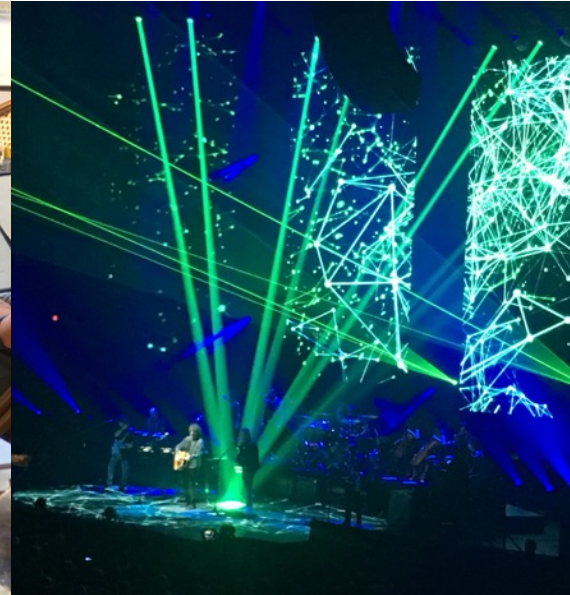
Clara turned 21 in 2019 (she graduates Penn this spring); she & Sharon met up in NYC, for selfies; Rene Sanchez & Silas moved from MT to D.C., together; RIP Snowflake, Clara's "sweet baby angel"; Bald Hill played the Franco Center in Lewiston on Sept. 12 (Hal's birthday); Pocketful of Mumbles at Portland's Allagash Brewery; quilts bring spring flowers...





Clockwise from top left: Sharon hangs with one of the six foster kids we looked after during 2019; Silas on Halloween (says his sister: "He doesn't always dress up but when he does, he goes hard."); Stripes, now 16 (and a bit batty), is the Last Cat Standing — often in a sink (he lays around most everywhere else); Hal with David Kett and Matthew Phillips silhouetted somewhere on England's West Country coast; dog food stolen by mice this fall and deposited in Hal's winter boot, apparently; Clara & the cast of *Melancholy Play*, her directorial debut, in November (a play she wrote, *Claradise*, was staged in September).





ELO concert in Michigan (top), an event for the whole family! ... H&S decamped (on a July 4 whim) for Quebec City, where flights of craft gin were had before heading north to Charlevoix and the Manoir Richelieu, high above the mighty St. Lawrence.





One last Silas shot from Big Sky Country? (Either way, Sharon's glow cup, deployed in Philly, belongs there) ... One last shot of Silas on a hitch? (Idaho's Salmon River Canyon) ... More certain: Paul Kahla lurks through cool exhibit at Penn; Hal in HCMC; Clara with Annie Fang; Sharon at Duckfat; and one last shot of dear Brodie, with Silas last winter.

