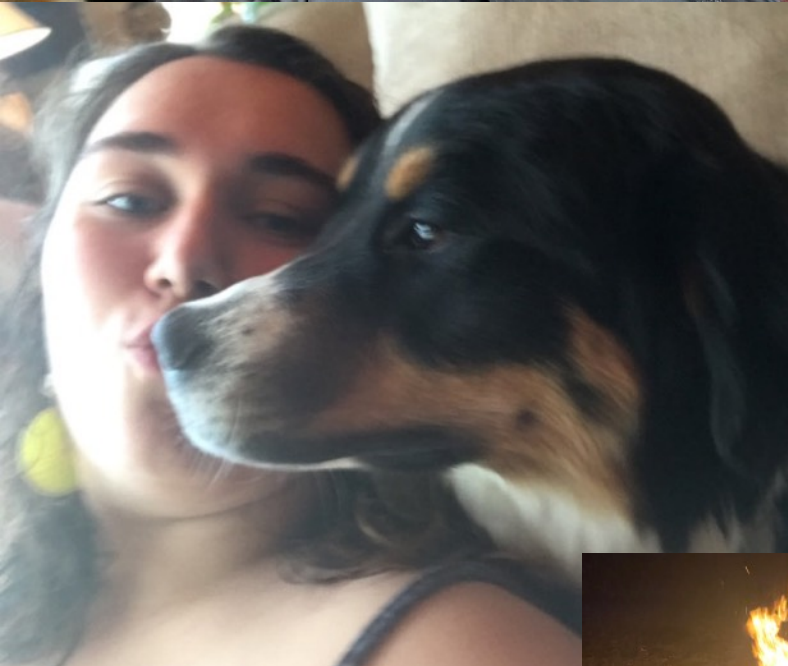


YEAR OF DOG & FIRE



With this photo-intensive PDF, please accept sincerely held New Year's salutations (a bit late) from all the Vanderlips. We hope this communication finds you well — or well enough.

In a year at once stultifying and way too eventful, our Bernese Mountain Dog remained blissfully unaware of the larger forces shaping our world. No dog ever had it so good actually. Persephone enjoyed our company, her reason for being, pretty much all day, every day... Never had the humans in her life been so very keen to take her on walks — ever day, often twice... When folks came to visit, they invariably gathered *outside*, which just happens to be Percy's preferred domain. She remains very much spoiled by the pandemic

lifestyle, but never jaded by it.

In April, upon submitting her thesis, Clara arrived home from college one last time. Despondent that all her post-graduate plans had been laid to waste, she and Sharon did the only responsible thing: They built an in-ground fire pit. You know: As a resume-builder.

As many a Mainer will tell you, fire venues became the center of our meager social lives during 2020. We hosted nearly a dozen events here. We attended as many others elsewhere. Without fire culture and Zoom, those extroverts among us may well have shriveled up and died last year.

Our self-confinement continues, of course, but let us recognize one more associated serendipity: home- and property-improvement projects. Sharon built a labyrinth. Hal undertook the latest in a succession of efforts to beat back the encroaching forest. In a 4-month orgy of pruning, culling and outright felling, views were expanded and comely, luxuriant groves were wrought from once unruly thickets.

When Silas arrived home for 2 weeks in December, several new sawyer certifications in tow, we felled, cut, split and stacked the big stuff. Can't wait to see how it looks in the spring, when the jungle returns.

We celebrated New Year's Eve with an epic fire too big for any pit. It burned for 8 hours, disposing of all the detritus we'd accrued — not just from 2020, but over the course of years. Friends and neighbors stopped by — in responsibly spaced shifts — to toast the occasion, to warm themselves, to participate in what felt like a cleansing.

They had arrived in search of community, to challenge division and confinement, to look for America. And so the moon truly did rise that night, over an open field.



Milestones: Having graduated Penn in May, Clara moved to Brooklyn and teaches at a public charter school there; Celebrated her birthday (and Hal's) with September outing to Long Island's North Fork; Sister/auntie Janet Kahla turned 60 in November; Silas & Rene, trading cherry blossoms for magnolia, left their D.C. flat for a Chapel Hill house (he's now program supervisor for Conservation Corps of NC); Percy turned 1 in June; Stripes still going strongish, at 18.





Exploring Our Covid-Confined World (clockwise from top): One of a dozen NG walks designated during the pandemic — Village Cemetery Route; Sharon turned the former pool area into a labyrinth; Amazing sculpture garden in Pownal (that's Sindel, whom we fostered last spring/summer); Acadia with Cordelia Pittman; Sharon on Casco Bay in July, aboard *The Bella*; Sawyer Boy in action; The Stevens Brook Route.





2020 Diversions: Quilt highlights included Sanford Biggers exhibit in Bronx and Sharon's own *Calm in the Chaos*; Birthday wine tour, Greenport, N.Y; *Midsommer*-inspired Halloween costume; Lake Winnepesaukee CC in New Hamster; Substitute 25th Anniversary trip to Wellfleet, on Cape Cod; Site of "dope bike ride," Silas says, adding (via insert): "Red drum caught off Outer Banks."

