

Yule (Epi)log, 2016



Trying to pass off 2015's letter at the end of 2016 had me feeling like any number of maligned barnyard creatures: sheepish, cowed, an ass. (I can't help thinking that except for ennobling manger songs, livestock don't get linguistic justice.)



Anyway... like the whole Christmas season, 2016 continued to be pre-occupied with infants. George and India resumed their bemused staring match when reunited at my parents' Boxing Day party yesterday – and Tristan and Alice's new baby Hannah was very much on everyone's mind, miraculously out of the Montreal hospital for Christmas, with wise grandparents travelling from the west to worship.



My dad's health is greatly restored, though he is likely to find rising from chairs extra work for the time remaining to him.

In short, while aware of the realities of mortality, the season has brought along real and shared moments of peace.

Here follows a condensed 2016.



January's early hospital stays gave way to home visits; dad was settled enough by month's end that we felt comfortable spending our birthday weekend at Yellow Point.

"February brings the rain..." As the downpours threatened to drown Victoria, Lucy's start on ballet pointe shoes seemed timely, as it kept her head above water.



We broke out Julie's 3000-piece jigsaw on Valentine's Day, even as we geared up for the month-end arrival of orchestra students from St. John, NB. Our wonderful billet Signe proved amenable to sunrise walks and good-natured teasing. She puzzled alongside us, so that the final pieces were in place the night before she flew home.



After chaperoning three dozen visitors around Victoria sights, we became the tourists on another road trip to Disneyland. We took along our #1 grand-daughter Ava, but swapped the pregnant and pre-occupied Emma and David for Julie's sister Karen and nephew Eli, reducing us to 3 adults minding 4 mouseketeers. Julie and Karen had a laughing fit in a submarine; Lucy and I had a particularly memorable night writhing through the dense crowds like two sockeye on the Fraser.





We drove through Hollywood on our way home, experiencing an early and surreal pre-tourist-bus experience on an unsanitized Walk of Fame.



A 2-week spring break meant that 3 days after LA, we had time to drop our mouse ears at home and *keep driving* up to Mount Washington for some snowy days with Daniel and Everest Lapp. En route we got to finish off Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, which along with Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor and Park* became my favourite audio books of the year.



In April we celebrated Emma and my dad's 25th and 90th birthday parties, Sheila and Rob hosting the latter. While Lucy dune-buggied with her school band in Oregon, Jon and I did our last performances in the Victoria Arts Festival. He took home the fiddle award for 10 & Under. Lucy returned in time to play a Mother's Day garden tour with her quartet.



The spring really was spectacular, with local strawberries in the first half of May and warm, breathless evenings that *no one* associates with James Bay. Like the summer, Emma's baby decided to put in an early and welcome appearance. George Otis Chenery arrived during the Joy of Life Festival weekend and made his first public appearance at Wafflerama two weeks later.



Especially with a new baby on the scene, June blurred by: gardening, final Whitespace Dance performances, baby cuddling, busking, track and field. Jon threw a (shaving) cream-pie in my face during a Car Free event on Father's Day.



I chaperoned Lucy and the rest of BC Fiddle Orchestra to New Brunswick at the end of the month. I don't have space to do justice to the wonderful time we had with our hosts John and Charlotte in St. Andrews, from lobster stew to a sail on the Bay of Fundy. Can't wait to get back.



While I was throwing out my shoulder in an ill-advised sandbuilding competition on the Atlantic, Jon and Eli were burying each other on the beaches of Parksville with Julie and Karen. The family reconvened in time for George's first appearance at the Cactus Jack mini-golf tournament, then the kids and I spent a week on Salt Spring's lovely Fiddleworks camp. Julie and Rosemary sailed over for the Friday evening concert and our last night with Therin and Henry, then we took off first thing for the mainland and a road trip to Saskatchewan.





Dirt roads and leaking radiators. Bison, moose, antelope, and prairie dogs. We had a blissful visit with the Goldie clan in Lumsden, but missed Julie's cousin Esme by a day when visiting her Aunt Roberta in Outlook. I got called to a work meeting in Austin, so Julie dropped me off at the Calgary airport before driving the family back to the coast. It was a sad loss of some planned time together, but we managed to sneak in a couple of days at Yellow Point when I returned from the hot brick that was Texas. By the end of the August birthdays, we had a teenager, a 10-year-old, and another golden set of Deep Cove memories (meteor showers, Pokemon Go, 'rescues at sea')

A jam-packed fall included fairs, a visit by Royals Will and Kate, my Uncle's Jim's 100th birthday, a Vancouver quickie to celebrate Don Couch's 80th, some questionable facial hair experiments, a near daily drive to Cordova Bay for badminton and ballet, lots of great time with Karen and Eli, more wood splitting than a woodchuck shucks and various injury-plagued hikes. Julie took part in marathon fundraising exercises then the Victoria 8K with David. Leonard Cohen, the last of 2016's lost icons, passed away ("There's a shoulder where death comes to cry"). Then dang if it wasn't Christmas and the end of the year, with much music, games and feasting. All the best for 2017!

