

Lasley Holiday Letter - 2020

This year started off brightly with a January visit from all the youngers for Late Christmas. Jacqui and Oliver and Derby were joined by Ben and Yanessa and Tristan. The house was rocking with laughter and filled with good food. Tristan may have been spoiled a bit. Derby too.

We bought a sailboat! Let's rewind a little. At the end of the 2019 sailing season, we realized that the only reason we didn't own a boat was because of Laura's call schedule (and previously, the kids activities). Since her new job was mostly regular hours, with no night or weekend obligations, we would have time to enjoy a real live-aboard sailboat. In October '19 we went to the Annapolis Boat Show for the first time ever. In addition to exploring all the new boats, we found a broker that we really liked. We had a list of requirements (length, style, age, features) which the broker sync'd up with immediately. In November and December, we saw a nice collection of used boats (never buy a new boat!), and quickly identified the one we really wanted. Note: Laura preferred an old school classic like a Sabre or Tartan, but the cabins were all too short for Dan. Introducing ***baji-naji***, our Dufour 382, built in 2018.



We've known the name for our boat for almost 20 years (it comes from a scifi book), and now we have the boat to carry it. We agreed on a price and went for the inspection and sea trial on a balmy Monday in February. Everything was good, and we closed in early March. We never expected to find an almost new boat for such a good price.

In parallel with this, our soccer team won the "Top of the Bottom" championship for the second season in a row. Plus our band was really kicking ass. We had 10 gigs booked for the first half of the year, which is our normal total for a full year. We were getting into new venues, and people were coming out just to see us. It was fantastic.

We both turned 60 this year, along with our cohort of high school and college friends. We visited Dan's Mom to celebrate his in February. We also got to meet one of our favorite authors.

Then, as we all know, everything came to a screeching halt. It didn't take us long to realize that COVID was real. The bars and movie theaters shut down, as did all the large concert halls, sports arenas, and live theaters. So no more band gigs, no more soccer games, no more dinners out. ESPN could only show the greatest games from years past. We were both very concerned because we fall into the high-risk categories. Laura continued to work from home as usual, with the extra burdens of staff turnover in her small department. Dan worked from home for about 3 weeks, and then he was laid off in April. He knew this was coming, so it wasn't a big surprise. We quickly discovered that we enjoyed having both of us home during this time. Dan picked up some of the chores, but even after all these years, he doesn't do them quite right. We discovered a family of foxes in our backyard, a mom and 4 or 5 kits. It was great fun to watch them tumble around each other as they grew. We also added a bird feeder, which has provided much merriment.



Many of our music friends rely on their gig money to supplement their day jobs, and the bars and restaurants were hurting too. As the rules evolved, they expanded their take-out options, and then added outdoor stages which helped, but it all cost a lot to earn a little. We maintained our isolation, and supported local restaurants through take out. While the virus spread rapidly through the New York area, much of the Philly area was kept under control, except for the nursing homes.

Our lives seem cheerful compared to so many. We Zoomed with the kids and other friends. Dan monitored the internet continuously. We let our hair grow. We have lost one friend to COVID, which feels like a lot; it's hard to imagine those in NYC and other hard-hit areas that have suffered much worse. Although this was a perfect opportunity to practice and improve, we didn't play music very much. It reminded us of the friends we were missing, which wasn't balanced by the joy of making music.

On May 10th, Maryland re-opened the marinas, recognizing that being on the open water was a good way to promote isolation. On Laura's birthday, we drove down to Deltaville Virginia to pick up *baji-naji* and bring her back up to the top of the Chesapeake. We did 50 miles a day, much of it under motor, and the times when we could raise the sails were delightful. From that weekend through the end of October, we were out on *baji-naji* every weekend, plus two longer vacations. Photos on Facebook. We covered 650 miles over the summer, not counting the 150 required to bring her home. Dan spent much of his free time making minor tweaks to the boat, but it didn't need much. We couldn't bring others sailing with us, but we did meet up with a few other boats along the way, keeping proper spacing. Note that the small boat industry exploded - dealers couldn't keep boats in stock, new or used. A few of our friends bought runabouts.

As autumn approached, Dan stepped up his job hunting. He got several nibbles, but a cautious hiring environment and some lingering "dinosaur" issues have made it difficult to find a match. In early October, we drove to Chicago to see Laura's folks. We had to cancel a large family gathering back in June, and we wanted to visit them before the world shut down again for the winter. Later that month, a bunch of our music friends got together (not us) and got just a little too close for a little too long. At least a half-dozen became ill from COVID. So far, all have recovered. Wear the damn mask.

There was an election. We voted. Biden won. Here's hoping for a rapid recovery.

Thanksgiving was just us. We decided to follow the rules, so Jacqui and Oliver didn't make the drive down. We ate all the food! Also, our Christmas decorations were up early. Christmas will also be constrained, but that won't stop us from shopping! Lots to get for the boat. And the grandchild.

Here's hoping that with a new vaccine and large doses of kindness, 2021 will be a better year for everyone. We're not ready to sail off into the sunset just yet, but when we do, we've got the boat!

Stay healthy and sane, and hopefully we can all hug each other soon!

Dan & Laura

