

Dear Family and Friends —

Happy Holidays! 2019 has been a year filled with joys, challenges, and a few disappointments for the Starretts, but Walter and I are still here and in relatively good health except for Walter's plaque psoriasis and my anxiety attacks.

Early last January our dog bit a neighbor kid. The kid's parents were hysterical and filed a police report. To make a long story short, little Vito had to be put down. Talk about a rough start to the year! Walter's psoriasis went into high gear. It's a wonder he has any skin left. I told him no more pit bulls. We'll adopt a cat or a bird or something.

Jamie, our youngest (22), graduated from NYU last spring and has moved back with us while he looks for a job. Any of you want to hire a comparative literature major? Walter says he should learn something practical instead of sitting in his room all day, reading David Foster Wallace. (This from a man who once dabbled in medieval French hymnody.)

Honestly, I don't see Jamie leaving us in the near future, although he now has a girlfriend, a musical theater major (she's currently working as a nail technician). One good thing: Imelda, has a practical head on her shoulders. She's urging Jamie to drive for Uber and pay down his student loans. Young kids have a rough time in the world we've handed them. I just hope these two can find their way.

Peggy, our oldest, is married to a wonderful guy. At first, his physical appearance (so many tattoos and gold teeth) was off-putting. But as Peg pointed out, Pablo comes from a different cultural background and should not be judged by middle-American standards.

Peg, Pablo, and Boom-Boom (Pablo's 18-year-old son from his first marriage) live near us in a 10,000-square-foot house with a five-car garage and a kitchen with onyx countertops! Pablo has business interests in Central America and the Cayman Islands and is gone a lot. He takes Boom-Boom along to teach him the business. We worry about Peg being alone so much in that big house, but she seems happy, staying busy with her chinchillas and her Bikram yoga studio.

Walter wants to retire next year! God knows he's had a rough time as a newspaper editor. With everybody now getting their news from the Internet, what's the point? Walter still has the Royal manual typewriter that he used as a young reporter. He keeps it on a small desk in our basement. "It's like me," he says. "A relic of a bygone era."

That's the way we both feel — like relics of a bygone era — but we're still above ground and starting next summer, we're both going to ring doorbells for Bernie Sanders!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! And hope you all feel the Bern!

The Starretts