

# The Goff Gazette

Volume 21

Metterich, Germany

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## Καλά Χριστούγεννα και Ευτυχισμένο το Νέο Έτος

## Greek Odyssey

Hey, "It's Greek to me." Following our tradition of sending our greeting in the language of a country we visited during the year, we send this "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" greeting in Greek since we visited Greece during our spring break. From our home to yours, we send the warmest greetings and wishes that 2006 be the best year ever for you and all those you love and hold dear. Once again, as we embark on a new year, let us all take a moment to reflect on the good in our lives and to share it through an act of kindness to a loved one and a stranger. Be good to yourself and a friend to those in need. Be happy.

One of our goals when we came to Europe in 1998 was to visit Greece. This year, during our spring break from school, we fulfilled that dream. Our flight on German Wings (yes, that is an airline) out of Cologne-Bonn was early, 6:35 A.M., so we spent the night near the airport and were on our way at the break of dawn arriving in Athens at 10:30. We were very impressed by the modern metro line that transported us into the city, where we had booked a room for the first two nights.

Coming up from the subway was a shock back to reality. Even though it was Sunday, the city was alive with activity! Busses, cars, taxis, and people of all types were scurrying about,

and we had no idea how to get to the hotel. Wow, this was a little scary, but

*(Continued on p. 2, Odyse...)*

## Sarah Plans Trip Around the World

My year has been full of surprises. I definitely have learned a lot. From the beginning of the year until about March, my spring collection of ili ansa was scheduled to arrive. Michelle, my partner, and I had been given the incredible opportunity to design and develop our own label. I made a final trip to the factory in Brazil in the New Year only to discover that our line had been shifted to a different factory. Our perfect fit no longer looked so perfect, and I started to get really nervous. All of the correct patterns were at the original

*(Continued on p. 4, Sarah...)*



*Ed, Sarah, Barbara, & Matt in Florida last summer.*

## Matt Enjoying San Francisco

Matt is still living on top of Russian Hill in San Francisco, with a beautiful bay view, and making the horrendous commute four days a week to Intel in Santa Clara. On Fridays, he works at Intel in San Francisco. His apartment location is terrific because he can walk to many restaurants and shops or use public transportation for everything except his commute.

His computer-challenged mother can't really tell you much about his job except that he said it used his engineering/technical undergraduate degree even more than his previous job in research and development at IBM. He

*(Continued on p. 4, Matt...)*

## Barbara Teaches 40 Years

Usually, my article about my year reads like a list of New Year's Resolutions. This year my article will be short. Ditto. Yep, I didn't make any progress on last year's list so I'm just going to Xerox it, and try again. I'm still teaching. I'm still married to Ed. I'm still expecting a dramatic weight loss any day. I guess my list does look boring, but my life isn't. I'm looking forward to a future of not teaching, losing weight, and still being married to Ed, which is statistically remarkable.

All year I've been counting my blessings, which are numerous. Ed and I have dreamed for years about tearing down the house on South Drive on Anna Maria Island, Florida, and building our dream home. We've lived in government quarters or government rentals our entire married life. The idea of doing everything our way was intoxicating.

We, somewhat unexpectedly, had a long-term tenant leave and were able to work a switch last summer by

*(Continued on p. 3, Barbara...)*

## Ed Celebrates 25 Years of Running

Two of our rental houses got flooded, I dislocated my shoulder, and I continued with my intense Cisco studies. We also moved our summer home from one of our rental units to another, and that is only part of it. 2005 has been an incredibly busy year, too busy. All I want to do is sit down and veg out but that does not seem to be on the horizon yet.

We'll be in Florida again this Christmas but much of our time will be consumed with finishing the refurbishing of "Bay Haven", our place on Bimini Bay, which we moved into last summer and which will be a seasonal rental during the winter. We know Sarah will be joining us there, but we don't have Matt's plans yet. We'll also be visiting family

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## Odysse...

fun too. We hadn't done anything like this in a long time. We had the name of our hotel, and a few nice people pointed us in the right direction; and after bumping along with our wheeled hand-carry bags, we finally located the hotel on a small side street. What a relief! Now to sit down and relax a little before venturing out to explore the city. Oops, it was not to be, as there were no rooms available, despite the printed reservation we had in hand. We were directed to another hotel a few blocks away which was more than adequate, but a much longer walk to the subway. Oh well, we could live with that for two days.

After a short rest, we were back out on the street and down into the subway looking at maps and our guide books and making plans to explore the Plaka, the heart of Athens. We were anxious to visit the huge Sunday flea markets that we had read about, and we wanted to scope out the Acropolis. Neither of us was disappointed as we spent the day shopping, eating, and making plans to visit the fantastic historic sites including the Acropolis the next day.

We made our way back to the hotel where we congratulated ourselves for surviving our adventure so far. After a restful night and delicious breakfast in the hotel, we ventured out once again. A number of travel agencies were along our way to the subway, and we found one of them to be especially helpful. There we planned the remainder of our week in Greece and arranged hotel reservations that were much more convenient and less expensive, too.

We devoted that day to exploring the historical sites in Athens including the Parthenon, the Ancient Agora, and the Temple of Zeus, to mention a few. We finished the day in the Plaka enjoying another Greek feast at an outside café while the sun set and the Acropolis loomed above us bathed in brilliant lights.

The next day we changed hotels and boarded our tour bus to the Peloponnese. Suspended from the mainland of Greece like a large leaf, with the Isthmus of Corinth as its stem, the ancient land of Pelops was an inviting day trip from Athens. On the way we passed the Olympic stadium and made a brief stop at the Corinth Canal which cuts the Peloponnese off from mainland Greece making it an island. The canal is at the bottom of huge manmade gash in the solid rock approximately 150 feet deep. We spent the day visiting archaeological sites in Mycene, Argos, Palamidi, Bourtzi and Epidaurus before returning to Athens via the coastal road of the Saronic Gulf. Fantastic!!!!

We were soon back at our new hotel and discovered that we could see the Acropolis from our balcony. Now to explore the local neighborhood. We like to get out of the tourist area and really absorb the local culture so we headed out to find a nice local restaurant. About three or four blocks off the main street, we found a place that looked friendly. It was very small, but they had tables outside. It was obviously a family-run business, and they were very happy to have the foreigners as their customers. They helped us place our order as the menus were in Greek. I think we got very special attention. We found a table out the side door that adjoined a small courtyard in front of a neighborhood church. Even though it was late, the courtyard was bustling with children playing and people socializing. We had really found a great spot.

The food arrived and it was delicious. We sat there a long time, sipping our drinks and enjoying the activity all around us. Finally, we started to feel the effects of our early departure. We settled our bill, really cheap, and headed back to the hotel with promises to the owners to return.

The next two days found us taking a trip within a trip, an overnighter to Delphi and Meteora. Delphi, known in ancient times as "the navel of the world" was the most important religious center of the ancient Greek world. Located high in the mountains of mainland

Greece, it was thought an appropriate setting for man's attempt to approach divinity. Many centuries later pious Christians, in an attempt to be closer to God, built monasteries on top of towering rock formations at Meteora. These edifices are very precariously located and were one of the most impressive sites we visited in Greece.

Our trip back to Athens was uneventful, and the next day found us on our last excursion outside the city. No trip to Greece would be complete without visiting the Greek islands. Our day long cruise took us to three islands and the ports of Aegina, Poros, and Hydra. We were impressed by the incredibly clear water and the white houses that covered the slopes of these port cities. We had a spectacular day and returned in time to revisit our favorite Greek restaurant.

We spent our last day at the National Archaeological Museum which was only a few blocks from our hotel. This is a "must see" for any visitor to Athens as it houses one of the most exciting collections of antiquity in the world including artifacts that date back to 4500 BC!!!

The next day we checked out of our hotel and bussed back to the airport passing sites that just a week before had seemed so foreign. We arrived in Germany and drove back to our house in Metterich with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The people of Greece could not have been more hospitable, the sites more impressive, and the weather better. It truly was a dream fulfilled.



Corinth Canal

## Barbara...

making 54th Street into an annual rental and one side of South Drive into the seasonal. We decided that we should live in Florida for a while before deciding on an architect, contractor, etc. We needed to look at more houses to determine the details of our dream house.

We had told the guys who were renting it that they could do whatever they wanted to it because we were planning to bulldoze it and build on the site. Big mistake! The guest bedroom was painted dark, military green and took four coats to cover the walls and the ceiling! Their creative inspiration for the LR/DR/kitchen was to splatter red, yellow, green, white, and black paint into Jackson Pollock-like patterns and carry that "motif" onto the valances and every other paint-able surface..

Obviously, first on the renovation agenda to get the place ready for a seasonal rental was to paint...except everyone was booked for months...and charged so much that we suspected they planned to retire after completing the job for the suckers from Germany. Inspired by this reality, I gave up my hobby of painting on cards and took up my three-inch paintbrush. I am happy to report after climbing into kitchen cabinets, closets, and sheds that no roaches have ever lived in the house and that paint does eventually come off—of hair, ears, arms, faces, knees, toes, and elbows.

Christmas vacation is shaping up as "finishing touches"—the porch, exterior, edges of rooms, etc. Egad! Will we be ready to host Christmas dinner? We'll probably be about as ready as we were for our first party—a celebration of Ed's completing twenty-five years of running without missing a day.

When I called the first newspaper to see if they were interested in an article on Ed's running streak, the guy said that Florida was full of old guys running around and that, that wasn't news. He gave me another number to call to see if the sports reporters were interested. Discouraged, I left a message on the answer machine. No one else was quite so rude, but they didn't jump for joy either.

You can imagine my amazement when the original paper's sports reporter called back totally enthused and came out with a photographer to spend no less than two hours with Ed, talking and taking pictures. We were even more amazed when we discovered

Ed had made the front page over the headline, which announced the first anniversary of Hurricane Charley! Inside, was a super story on Ed and his streak. I think the paper's theme that day was about the resilience and persistence of Floridians, whether in running or recovering from storms.

Actually, my teaching has changed a little this eighth year in Germany. For the second time in my life, I have a class with fifth graders. I'm teaching creative writing on a "wheel", which means that I teach each fifth grader for one quarter. They are absolutely adorable, enthusiastic, and loving. Every day they come in and I say, "You just won't believe the cool things we are doing today." They wiggle and squirm like happy puppies and plunge into the daily writing, loving every minute of it. Even the sixth graders seem a little jaded by comparison.

I have only one class of my sixth grade language arts. Since this is my 40th year of teaching and I know I'm nearing the end of my career, I'm trying to pour everything I know into their brains, as my last hurrah. Likewise, in my sixth and seventh/eighth grade remedial reading classes, I'm suddenly aware that I'm not going to be doing this much longer. I'm a little nostalgic.

Everything we do, I wonder if we'll do it again here—Christmas markets, stocking my pantry with trips to Luxembourg for French ingredients, and watching the snow fall on our back yard. We have been blessed with good family and friends and good travels to fascinating places. I'm sure the next adventure will be exciting too.

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## Ed..

and friends in the area, and they will be visiting us. We always enjoy our winter break there, as it is a refreshing change from the gray German winter.

You may be thinking that hurricanes caused the flooding I mentioned above. That was not the case. A water pipe in our Elmira house froze and broke. Water saturated the walls and ceiling of both apartments causing them to collapse. The good news is that insurance covered most of it, and our property manager handled all the details. Both units have been repaired and are now better than ever. The other flood occurred in our Florida duplex when a hose on a washing machine burst. The damage there was minimal,

but quite disruptive to the tenants. As I write, that place is almost back to normal. We just have to get the carpet put back down.

School has been more of a challenge than usual this year. First, my Cisco training immediately followed the end of the school year. We were out on Friday and classes started on Monday. Exhaustion from the school year and jet lag just about did this old guy in. Somehow I managed to get through the exams with respectable grades and joined Barbara in Florida.

There we commenced our move of about three miles from one of our rental units to another. Somehow I managed to squeeze in cataract surgery on my right eye which went well. Our good friend Bill Ryskamp loaned us his truck and muscles to help out.

We took a break from our moving process to go to a Goff family reunion at Seneca Lake in Up-State New York. While getting out of a boat I snagged my foot on a chain on the dock and fell. Holding a cooler in my left hand, I tried to break my fall with my right hand. Big mistake... The force of the fall dislocated my shoulder, and an MRI later revealed cartilage damage and a torn rotator cuff. I have been living with it, hoping that it would heal; but it now seems evident that I will have to have surgery to get it back to full use. Unfortunately, the doctor told me that I would not be able to run for at least five days after the surgery.

Speaking of running, the shoulder is not a problem. In fact, after we returned from the reunion which, by the way, was fantastic, I hit a major milestone in my running career. On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Matt, Sarah, and Brian (Sarah's boyfriend) joined me as I finished my 25<sup>th</sup> year of running without ever missing a day. Barbara called the local papers, and I really felt like a celebrity when my photo appeared on the front page of the Manatee Herald Tribune, circulation of 110,000. The running streak continues today, but that surgery looming in the future has me concerned.

This school year has not been the best. This is the NCA visit year, which means a lot of extra work; and with my new Cisco training, I am now teaching two courses of Cisco during the same period. I have a new Physics text, which is great, but requires new preparations. Also, DoDDS adopted new attendance and gradebook software this year that was not adequately tested. It

*(Continued on p. 4, Ed...)*

**Ed (cont. from p. 3)...**

has been fraught with problems, thus, consuming even more of my time. And, to top things off, as the BHS webmaster, I was notified last week that our Extranet, "for security reasons", was going to be disconnected. This has been my pet project for about five years, and I had been told that it was to be the model for all DoDDS schools.

So it goes. Can retirement be far in the future? We hope it will be sooner rather than later, but it all depends on FERCCA, the government agency that is charged with unraveling our misplacement in the wrong retirement program when we returned to DoDDS in 1998. Stay tuned.

**Sarah...**

factory and they weren't giving them up. I extended my stay in Brazil so I could refit all of the designs. I left there thinking I had gotten things back on track; but once I was back in New York our phone calls and emails to Brazil went unanswered. The final blow was a call from Brazil saying the fabric, which had been sitting in their warehouse for months, was damaged. The delivery date was now impossible and that was the end of that. As disappointing as it was to not make delivery, I still am so thankful for everything I learned from the experience. And I still feel great that so many incredible and well-known stores like Delia's and Intermix ordered our designs. But most of all, I am so thankful to have met Michelle. We have big plans for a future business; and, hopefully, it will all work out the second time around. I'm going to take a break from

the rat race for awhile first though.

For the last three years my boyfriend, Brian, and I have been planning and saving for a trip around the world. We leave on January 11th for a six-month trip which will take us to San Francisco, Oahu, Kauai, Kwajalein, Yap, Palau, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Mongolia, Russia....and then who knows...Estonia?? I am very excited. ...so I guess you'll be hearing about that in next year's Goff Gazette. I hope you all have a great year!

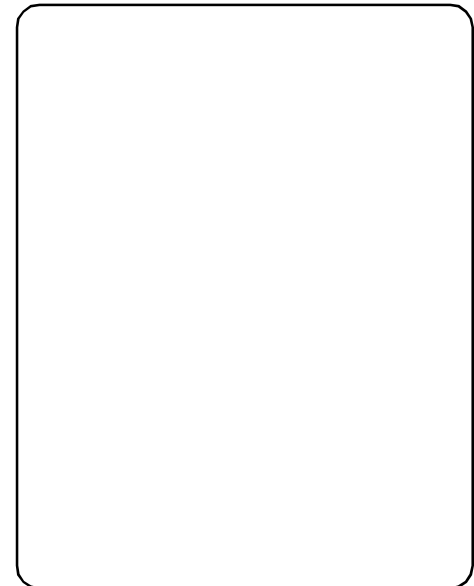
**Matt...**

appears to like the variety of researching what products Intel should produce from 2-10 years down the line.

We caught up on some of his news when he came to help celebrate his dad's 25th year of running. We enjoyed some great sunsets and evenings sitting out on the dock. Our tenants had always told us about the dolphins, that liked to play in the bay in front of the house; but I think they had been scared away by the red tide. We still loved the view and our regular visits from Big Blue (not IBM, but a huge blue heron, who thinks he owns the dock and makes frequent visits to make sure we understand that he's just loaning us the spot for a while). I suspect he's disappointed with us because one end of the dock is a fish-cleaning station, which was used frequently by our previous tenant, who was a charter fishing boat captain. He also fished for smelt off the dock and shared with Big Blue.

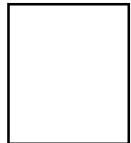
Matt and Val are still enjoying all that the San Francisco area affords

for entertainment and travel. We can understand why they stay; but we hope that, one of these years, they decide to come back to the East Coast.



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