

The Goff Gazette

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Glædelig Jul Gledlig jol og Nyar

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 Danish since we visited Denmark during our Thanksgiving break. From our home to yours, we send the warmest greetings and wishes that 2007 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.

Ed's 2006

We celebrated New Year's Eve in Florida and winged our way back to Germany the next day. It is hard to go from summer-like weather to winter in less than twenty-four hours. Hopefully, we won't have to do that many more times.

I took two major steps toward retirement this year. First, I got my FERCCA packet which finally allowed me to select the retirement options I was denied when
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Barbara's Year 2006

Fun, family, friends, flea markets, and frustration! My alliterated year begins and ends with F's. Last Christmas we finally got to enjoy the fruit of our extensive summer labors at our Anna Maria Island home, Bay Haven. We loved sitting out on the dock watching sunrises and sunsets, dolphins cruising as little as 18" off our dock, and hosting family and friends. We missed by one day seeing a baby manatee's birth off our dock. This is the second baby born there!

One of our favorite gatherings was a celebration of Mom and Dad's 65th wedding anniversary. The gathering of the clan brought Mom and Dad, Uncle
(Continued on p. 3, Barbara...)



Sarah, Barbara, Ed and Matt

Matt moves to CNET

In June, I finally marked a close to four long years of commuting one-hundred miles daily to Intel. I took three weeks off before starting a new job in downtown San Francisco at CNET Networks. I'm still working in Finance, and I am really enjoying the change from a 100,000 person company to one with "only" 2,000. CNET is growing, and the opportunity to help them transition, in both processes and systems, from a small to medium-sized company is both challenging and interesting.

In my time off between jobs, I took the opportunity to take paragliding lessons. Since I could schedule near-daily lessons, I was able to achieve my P2 rating before I returned to work, allowing me to fly without my instructor. Getting flight time is challenging now that I'm working again, but I have taken one trip to the mountains and get out to the beach for coastal soaring as much
(Continued on p. 4, Matt...)

2006 Travels

Much of our traveling this year was day-tripping to places relatively close-by such as Mandersheid, Vianden, Luxembourg, and numerous Mosel river destinations. After eight years in Germany, we discovered flea markets or as they say in Germany "floh" markets, but we didn't limit ourselves to Germany. France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg are within an hour of home so those were interesting places to try and pick up some weekend treasures too. Old things here (as opposed to the States) are really old like the Christmas market we went to last weekend that was in the "new" castle on which construction started in the year 1008!!!! And that goes for things in the flea markets too. That is one of the reasons flea markets here are so interesting.

esting.

During our Spring break, we
(Continued on p. 2, Travel...)

Sarah Circles Earth

Last year at this time, Brian and I were packing for our big trip around the world....and now we're homeowners. Things change quickly. I guess I should have a lot to say about all the travels, but mostly I'm just thinking about the broken sprinkler heads and when the best time is to go to Home Depot to beat the crowds. Our trip was great though. I'll try to sum it up real quick. We went all over the place....San Francisco, Oahu, Kauai, Kwaj, Yap, Palau, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China, Mongolia, Russia, and Germany. We started off in San Francisco to visit with Matt and Val. We went to Alcatraz and, of course, 710 Ashbury. In Hawaii we snorkeled, barbecued, and hiked the Kalalau trail
(Continued on p. 4, Sarah...)

Travel...

headed over to the Loire Valley in France which is west of Paris. From the 15th to the 18th century, the Loire Valley served as the playground of kings, princes, dukes and nobles, who expended family fortunes and the wealth of the nation to turn it into a vast neighborhood of lavish châteaux. The châteaux of the Loire are incredible. Château is the French term for

castle, but they differ greatly from the castles of Germany. I think our favorite one was Château de Chenonceau which spans River Cher, a tributary of the Loire. Other favorites included Château de Chambord and Château de Valençay.

Our other long European excursion was to Sweden, where over the Thanksgiving holiday, we picked up Barbara's new Volvo S60. On our drive back home, we stopped in Copenhagen, Denmark, for a few days, where we saw the Little Mermaid statue in the harbor and went to Christmas markets in Nyhavn and Tivoli Gardens.

We spent most of the summer at "Bay Haven", our place on Bimini Bay in Anna Maria, Florida. Although much of the summer was spent making improvements, we enjoyed watching beautiful sunsets and the dolphins as they frolicked in the bay only feet from our dock. As part of Barbara's parent's sixty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration, we hosted a party for family which was enjoyed by all.

During the summer, we took a trip up to Rainbow Cove on Seneca Lake in New York to participate in the annual Goff family "non-reunion". It was great to see everyone again and get reacquainted with those we hadn't seen for a while.

As we did last year, we will again spend our Christmas break in Florida. Matt and Sarah will be there

too; and we will have time to visit relatives and friends in the area before heading back to Germany on January 9th.



Ed and Barbara at Château de Chenonceau

Cars

When we purchased my "all-time favorite" car, my Audi A4, I knew that I would eventually have to leave it behind in Europe, because it has German specs. Recently, after learning of Florida's "import" tax on vehicles brought it from abroad or out-of-state, we decided that sooner was better. I needed a new car that would "age" before greedy Florida assessors got a hold of it. Our property taxes are so high that I should have "direct deposit" of my pay to Sam Cornwall, Manatee County Assessor.

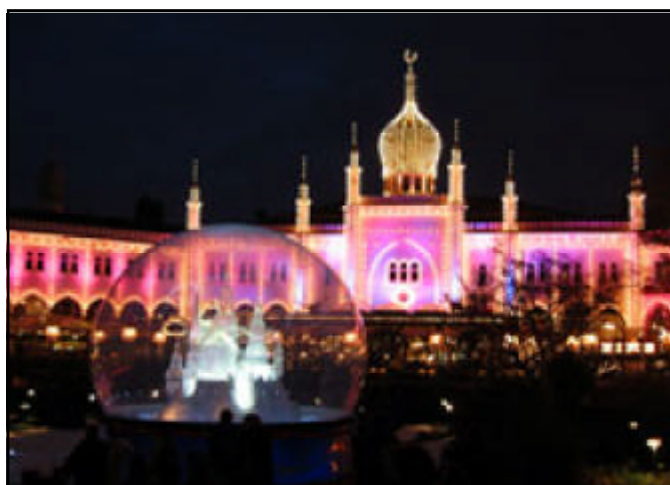
After discovering that it would cost \$10,000 to convert my Audi to Stateside specs, we began the search.

I started at my local, special US military auto sales Audi agency, off base, hoping to find another jewel. The disinterested salesman was interested only in smoking his cigarette, which he did with more focus than anyone I've ever seen... other than people in movies who are smoking special, hand-wrapped ones. He mumbled that he had no deals; I could buy cheaper in the States, and he had no test vehicles to check out. Why did he take out large ads in the Eifel Times?

My next big stop was Capitol Motors, where Ed bought his Volvo wagon. I wandered amongst the Volvos and BMW's and test drove the various models and series. Thinking of my brother Gary as I tested the BMW 5-series and also remembering that Lance Armstrong had driven last year's pace car at the Indianapolis 500 at a reported 120 MPH, I decided that I couldn't leave Germany without besting that. Out on the autobahn, I wasn't the fastest car on the road as the car purred to a smooth 120. Hmm, I thought, was it 120 or 125? Just in case I decided to edge on up toward 130 to be sure that I was faster than Lance. The car was loving it. The sporty BMW feel was more like my Audi than the cushier Volvo, but the dashboard didn't seem user-friendly.

After dragging Ed along to do a little test driving, too, we decided on the Volvo S60 in good Florida, warm weather colors of silver exterior and taupe interior. We enjoyed picking it up at the factory in Goteborg, Sweden, over Thanksgiving and driving it back through Copenhagen, Denmark, where we enjoyed the Tivoli Christmas market on a sunshiny day, amidst the other days of constant rain.

On my birthday, Dec. 14th, someone asked me if the car was my birthday present. I told them I thought Ed was already working on Christmas/birthday 2011. I'm still missing my great car, which sold to the first young man who drove it; but I'm sure I'll always remember it and grow to like the new one.



Christmas Market at Tivoli in Copenhagen

Ed...

we returned to DoDDS in 1998. And second, I won my grievance against DoDDS for placing me in the wrong pay lane when we returned to DoDDS. The best part was seeing my paycheck, which included the back pay and interest. We have only one more hurdle to cross before we can retire and that is making payment for the money we withdrew from our retirement fund when we resigned back in 1981. We are anxious to settle this debt, but the Office of Personnel Management has indicated that it could take as long as a year before they can make the calculations. In the meantime we are paying 7% interest on the balance. Somehow that doesn't seem fair....

Travels this year included a number of day trips to places of interest here in Germany and the four other countries that are within an hour's drive of our house (Luxembourg, Belgium, France, and Holland). Our spring break found us exploring the Loire Valley in France. We spent most of the summer in Florida but did manage a trip up to New York for a family reunion.

Since we returned to Germany, we have found a new interest, flea markets. We have picked up a few items at the local Bitburg "floh" market and have ventured to more distant treasure troves such as Metz, France. Some of the things that are considered "new" here would be considered "antiques" in the States. Barbara found an old spinning wheel, really old, and I found an old wrought iron park bench (less the wooden slats). Books and pottery are among some of our most popular purchases.

My school year has turned out to be more difficult than average. I have six different class preparations: Physics, Cisco Networking 1, Cisco Networking 2, Computer Applications, Computer Service and Support, and Web Site Development and Management. This alone would keep me quite busy, but my students seem to be less motivated than usual this year. This may be partially do to the war as quite a few parents are, have been, or will be "forward deployed". Retirement is looking even better....

Barbara...

David and Aunt Marla, Gary and Renie, Abby, Amanda, Nick, Matt and Valerie, and Sarah and Brian. It just doesn't get much better than that. We hopped off the dock and swam in Bimini Bay in front of our house and tried out my kayak (my last year's Christmas gift from Ed).

Sarah and Brian, who had visited us in Germany on their way back to the States from a half year in Asia, squeezed in hours of scanning family photos, in preparation for a slideshow for Grandma and Grandpa's 65th, which they presented at Bay Haven. While in Germany, they also managed to enjoy some World Cup soccer mania, including visiting a jumbotron viewing of a World Cup match in Trier (the oldest city in Germany), packed in with Germans cheering for their team.

The nonreunion in New York with the Goff's at Rainbow Cove on Seneca Lake was fabulous as usual. I'm sure Ed will write about the fun times in more detail. We love catching up on everyone's news in a beautiful setting.

Since we are winding down in Europe, don't get excited because we always have long exits, we have tried to pack in as much traveling as possible. I especially love the local excursions. This has been a big flea market year. Since my addiction to stamping continues to grow and I'm always thinking of new things to try, I got a brainstorm about old things. Here I was in the land of old books, and I mean old. I've been purchasing cheap books with the most aged-looking pages, to rip up as backgrounds for cards. Some are so amazing that I just couldn't bear to tear them. I got a Hitler era geography of Europe and a French dictionary from the 1800's. I've also gotten some campy French magazines from the 50's. How can the 50's be vintage when I remember them so clearly?

Over the years of writing *The Goff Gazette*, I have tried to include the differences of doing ordinary things in another country. Some of you may remember my "Morning in the Market" trudging through the mud in my flipflops as I shopped for fish and produce in the Philippines. This year you can either quit reading right now or learn how the German medical system operates.

The frustrating part of my year has been injuries. I don't think of myself as accident prone, but anyone looking at my list of problems would probably think me deserving of a Saturday Night Live skit. In late October, while waiting to see a German doctor after my first knee/shoulder injury, my knee went out on a staircase at school. Since I was dutifully being careful (because of the initial injury) and was holding on tight at the time, I didn't fall, but I swung out from the banister like Tarzan's Jane dislocating my shoulder before landing on my injured leg.

Four days later, carrying on with the good work ethic passed on to me by my parents and trying not to whine, I was closing my classroom door with my right arm tucked in tight to my body when a whirling dervish, otherwise known as a nearly tardy fifth grader, yanked the door open with me still attached.

I got to view the impressive German medical system up close and personal. If my doctor's talents equal his Teutonic superiority, I'm in good hands. He is followed from room to room by a young lady who types onto a computer keyboard as he shoots rapid-fire German, which includes some recognizable words like meniscus and sub scapular. I asked him about the prognosis. "First, the diagnosis," he says sternly. When I explain that I need a government form filled out, he looked it over swiftly and said, "What is all this? So many boxes. I will not do this."

Out at the main desk a few minutes later, I have x-rays, ultrasounds, and a computer-generated letter stowed in a sturdy see-through bag.

Off to another office and another doctor, my MRI's take 20 minutes each in a state of the art machine and are sent immediately, electronically, to my orthopedic doctor. I carry the backup CD and films with me.

Back with my original doctor, he tells me I must have surgery. He will begin with the knee. I will be three days in the hospital and about six weeks on crutches. After I recover from that, he will do the shoulder. He asks me to check if my insurance will cover "shock wave therapy"....with the intimation that antiquated American medicine might

(Continued on next page)

Barbara continued...

not. I leave without answers on how I will manage six weeks on crutches with a shoulder that's next on the surgery list.

When I speak on the phone to the U.S. government official in charge of medical problems, his voice took on outrage and astonishment, "You mean the doctor will not fill out the CA 119?"

"Well," I said, "the one-page form is complicated and the 17 pages of fine print instructions on how to fill in the one-page is intimidating for even an English-speaking person like me. I gathered from the pause that the government official thought that in addition to my knee and shoulder injuries, I might be brain-damaged if I did not recognize the elegance and simplicity of the form and instructions. Or, perhaps, he was recovering from his outrage that I didn't understand the necessity of the paperwork.

Being one of those people who gets rattled by long silences and tends to babble a little to fill in the gaps, I think I muttered that my German doctor spoke German and that his nonmedical English seemed somewhat limited.

Finally, the man took pity on me and with an exaggerated sigh and said, "FAX me what you have."

Tune in next year, same time, same place, and you will learn the next exciting chapter in Barbara Explores the German Healthcare System with a Hospital Stay. Actually, you may be reading about my closed-casket memorial service because yesterday, while handing out tests to my remedial readers, who mostly have ADHD and are fast-moving little critters, one child rocked forward in his chair just as I passed behind, thus hooking my much-abused right foot into the metal base, which twisted the extremely abused right knee and my hip socket. With my usual quick reflexes, I saved myself with my previously dislocated right arm and shoulder and spent the rest of the day sitting on an icepack with a knee wrap.

As Ed says, "Life with Barbara Goff is never dull." Personally, I think I'd like dull.

Sarah...

Going back to Kwaj was wonderful. It was really fun to see everything and everybody again and show Brian how weird the place is. Yap was great. We looked at stone money and manta rays and drank Coke II. In Palau, we rented kayaks and camped on a little island for three days. We swam in a lake that had thousands of non-stingy jellyfish. It looked like outer space.

Singapore was very clean. People in Indonesia really wanted to sell us stuff, but we managed to get out of there without any sarongs. We went to the orangutan sanctuary in Malaysia. Thailand was really chill. We were there for Songkran, the water festival, which was really fun. In Laos we went to a mulberry organic farm to help them, but they didn't need any help so we just ate a lot of mulberry omelets.

Vietnam was really fun, because everyone we met there was completely crazy. China was interesting. We went to the Forbidden City and The Great Wall. Mongolia was out of this world.so beautiful and my favorite... We ate camel and horse and fermented mare milk, but turned down the testicles. We took the Trans-Siberian railroad through Russia and then flew to Germany. All in all a great trip

After all that moving around, we are very excited to be staying in one place for awhile. We've settled down in South Florida. Brian is working for the family business, Chuck's Backhoe. I am doing fashion design freelance for a company in NYC via the Internet. We bought an old Florida house built in 1964. I love it so much. We spend all our time working on it now. We spent the first few weeks chiseling up tile and refinishing the terrazzo floors. We're really sticking with the 60's look. It's pretty much just like Edward Scissorhands around here. We have a big fenced in backyard; and after the holidays we're going to adopt a greyhound.

Matt...



as I can.

Another relatively new hobby is photography. I bought a digital SLR camera and have really been enjoying learning about photography. San Francisco is a great city in which to take "photowalks," and I have done a few with great results. If you're interested, you can see some of my photography at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kwajkid>. Many are kept private for friends and family only, if you have a Flickr account you should add me as a friend to see more (or sign up for a free account if you don't already have one)!

Please stay in touch and let me know if you're ever in the San Francisco Bay Area so we can visit!



Jouster at Mandersheid Castle



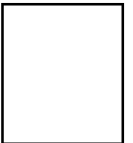
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Editor: Ed Goff
Features: Barbara Goff
Matt Goff
Sarah Goff

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