

The Goff Gazette

Volume 24

Bradenton, Florida

December, 2008

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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 English since we spent the entire year within the United States. From our home to yours, we send the warmest greetings and wishes that 2009 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.



Brian & Sarah and Barbara & Ed on the windy observation tower at Robinson Preserve. Thanksgiving, 2008. Matt and Valérie are still in London.

Barbara's Year 2008

My exemplary husband turns into a stern taskmaster every year when it's Goff Gazette time. He begins with hints and charming grins which, after Thanksgiving, become alternating bribes and mild threats. When I complained that my joyful life lacked newsworthy material, Ed suggested that I talk about my goals. Resigned, I opened my two-year planner, where I had recorded them.

My first 2008 New Year's Resolution was to get over feeling guilty about not working. A tsunami of accomplishment swept through my body. Check. No guilt! Next, I had vowed to join a writers' group and actually write something. After

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Ed's Retirement

My first full year of retirement has been more like a series of career changes than what I envisioned. Having lived overseas in government housing or rentals for thirty-seven years, we really didn't have much idea about home maintenance and repair. We bought our house in Bradenton, FL in 2003 with the idea that we could rent it until we retired. We thought we did a good job of screening our tenants, but they disappointed us by leaving the house and yard in poor condition so we have spent a lot of time and money trying to recover. When we told them that we might retire, they immediately moved without paying their rent

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Matt and Valérie

Valérie and I have been living in London, England for a little over one-and-a-half years now. We've explored much of the city, but we've also been taking the opportunity to see other parts of Europe including trips to [Fuerteventura](#), Canary Islands; [Edinburgh](#) and [Glasgow](#), Scotland; [Munich](#), Germany; [Paris](#) and [Nîmes](#), France; Brussels, Bruges, and Ghent, [Belgium](#); Greenville, SC; and, most recently, [Brighton](#), England. I also went to Beijing for a week on business and was able to stay the weekend after to do some sightseeing.

Our biggest adventure of the year was a trip to Tanzania in August to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro and take a

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Sarah and Brian

It has been another nice year in suburbia. Our lives have been occupied with greyhounds, gardening, music, and trash. The family and garden have been growing! Brian has been enjoying playing upright base with his new contra dance band. ...and we have been trying to eliminate our waste through composting, reducing, reusing, and repurposing.

We have recently adopted another greyhound, Bunny, to keep Ojus company. She is just the sweetest little girl you can imagine, another angel on earth. She has big floppy ears that sometimes stand straight up and a mohawk down the back of her neck. She looks like an ancient Egyptian dog. She loves kissing everyone she meets, espe-

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Matt...

safari. We took the redeye out of Heathrow on August 23rd, connected in Nairobi, Kenya, and arrived at Kilimanjaro International Airport in Tanzania the next morning where we met the hotel van for the hour shuttle to the Springlands Hotel in [Moshi](#). We spent two nights there recovering from the trip, walking around the city, relaxing by the pool, and trying not to freak out about the upcoming climb. We also met our local guide, Yusef, and the foursome with whom we'd hike (coincidentally, they were from England).

The next morning we loaded our gear into vans and drove about an hour to Machame Gate, one of several entrances to Kilimanjaro National Park. After registering with the parks service, we met our assistant guide (Mohammed), cook (Abdullah), and porters (three per hiker so 18 for our group!), and started the ascent. We had chosen to climb the Machame route (aka the "Whiskey" route) as we had read that it was the most scenic—it's also a longer route, so while more expensive it also affords more time for acclimatization, a leading reason for failure to summit.

Leaving from Machame Gate (1490m [4890ft]), we climbed mainly through rainforest. As this portion is shared with other routes, the trail itself was wide and well maintained. The weather was a little drizzly, which made for good hiking (cool and keeps the dust down). Day 1 ended at Machame Camp (2980m [9780ft]) after about five hours of hik-

ing. We had our first dinner cooked by Abdullah which was not only delicious but far more than we could finish. Food on this trip would be the least of our worries.

We were awoken (as we were every morning) by a porter who brought us coffee and warm water for washing our hands and faces in the tent. As you might imagine, there aren't any facilities (other than out-

grab our gear (sleeping bags, extra clothes, etc) and power-walk to the next camp, usually arriving before us—despite tales to the contrary, we never saw porters literally running, except on the last day downhill.

Day 2 took us through and out of the rainforest and into the alpine savannah. We were climbing in fog (clouds, really) much of the day, but after reaching Shira Plateau we had period views of the Western Breach of Kilimanjaro in the distance. It was pretty imposing to see such a huge mountain which seemed so far away, yet know we would be climbing to the top within the week. After about five more hours of hiking, we reached our second camp, Shira (3840m [12,600ft]) where the cycle of stuffing ourselves, falling asleep by 8pm,



Valérie and Matt at the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

houses) on the mountain, but even this was a nice step-up from normal backpacking. Abdullah had prepared breakfast (again, more than we could eat), and we started on day two of the hike.

The most obvious advantage of porters instead of traditional backpacking is the lack of gear a tourist carries. When I climbed Gannett Peak (WY) in 1998, my pack weighed 55 lbs. On this trip, my pack contained only 3L of water, a rain shell, a few energy bars, and my camera. A less obvious advantage is that all of the set-up/tear-down work is done by the porters. So, when we started day two, we hit the trail while the porters started packing up camp. Each day, they would pack the tents and kitchen,

and coffee/washing water repeated.

The aches and pains were starting to kick in around this point. A long day of hiking isn't that hard, nor is sleeping in a tent, but stringing together a few days starts to add up. We also had crossed the 10,000ft mark, so the effects of the altitude were being felt by all. Before we left Moshi we had started taking Diamox to help with the acclimatization, but, although it may have helped with that, it also had the significant side effect of tingling hands and feet—sometimes as strong as the feeling you get when you're limb is waking up after having fallen asleep. But, a huge, delicious (and carb-y) meal and a few acetaminophen made all the difference.

Day 3 was specifically de-

signed to expose us to a much higher altitude to help with acclimatization. We left Shira and climbed for several hours out of the alpine savannah and into near-desert. After lunch, we hiked to Lava Tower (4630m[15190ft]) which is higher than the highest camp on the trek. Following the “climb high, sleep low” maxim, this allowed us to experience the altitude and push our bodies to help accelerate acclimatization. The trail continues down to Barranco Camp (3950m [12960ft]), in my opinion the most beautiful of all with sweeping vistas of Moshi all the way to the top of Kilimanjaro. After about seven hours of hiking and quite a bit of vertical climb/descent, we were ready for our sleeping bags that night.

As there are only a relative handful of routes up the mountain, you see quite a few other hikers and crew along the way. Camping is only permitted at official sites where the Parks maintain rudimentary facilities and to help minimize the ecological impact to the mountain (by limiting camps and trails). A goal our guide had for us each day was to try to leave as early as possible and before as many other groups as possible. This helps since the trail is more clear; passing other groups can be difficult, depending on the terrain. Also, camps are first-come-first-served, so the first porters at the camps claim the best sites for their hikers.

Day 4 started with the frightening sight of the Great Barranco wall. We were a little slow that morning, so before we left camp we could see groups of hikers and porters already making their way up a trail so steep and switch-backed that it seemed to be a 1,000 ft staircase... on the side of a cliff. The good news was it wasn't as treacherous as it at first appeared. The bad news was it

was pretty much 1,000 feet of trail that was more-or-less as steep as a staircase. Our next camp, Karanga (3900m [12800ft]), was actually slightly lower and some people bypass it entirely to head straight for the base camp. We chose to add the extra day to allow more time for acclimatization.

I've mentioned acclimatization a lot so far—in fact, although Kilimanjaro is a strenuous, physically demanding hike, the leading cause of failure is altitude sickness. I suspect one reason is that many people



Valérie and Matt during their visit to Brighton, UK.

who attempt it are experienced low-altitude hikers who are physically fit, self-selecting away people who aren't physically capable or inexperienced. But, altitude sickness is unpredictable. All six in our party felt some of the affects: headache, loss of appetite, nausea, and insomnia. We met several people who were unable to continue due to the severity of their symptoms. One guy I met at breakfast at the Springlands said, of his group of six on a five-day route, only one was able to summit.

At Karanga Camp, I met another hiker who was in pretty severe pain. He was a semi-pro boxer (coincidentally, also from England) who had a severe headache and nausea. He was planning to try to skip Karanga and go straight to base camp, but wisely decided to camp early and see if he improved. We chatted a bit, and I gave him some

of our acetaminophen and extra Diamox, but it wasn't looking good. Once you have severe symptoms, the best remedy is to descend, but he was determined.

The Day 5 hike was from Karanga Camp up to Barafu Camp (4550m [14930ft]), base camp for the summit. A rocky, windswept perch, it's obvious you're not meant to spend much time here. There's enough room for the tents and out-houses and not much else. We had an early dinner here and went to bed as early as possible. At 11pm, we got up, ate as much as we could, topped up our water, and at Midnight we started our summit attempt.

This night was very clear, cold, and dark, just a day after the new moon. The sky was full of stars though, and a line of headlamps snaked across the scree of the final trail to the summit. We had put on as many layers as we could stand: I had on thermals, an extra thermal top, a long-sleeve wicking shirt, fleece pants and jacket, windproof pants, and an insulated parka. I also wore a balaclava, hat, and gloves. And I've never been colder in my life.

Miserably cold, out-of-breath, and walking in the dark, my vision tunneled down to just the trail in front of my feet. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. I couldn't feel my fingers, couldn't move my toes. Hours ticked by with no change, just my boots, the boots of the hiker in front, and the trail between. Left. Right. Left. Right.

After more than five hours, we reached the rim of the crater and Stella Point (5685m [18650ft]). We paused briefly to rest and try to eat a bit—and unclog our Camelbacks, the cold had completely frozen the drinking tubes so most of us had been without water for several hours.

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Yusef was really pushing us to reach the summit for sunrise, so we continued as the sky slowly brightened.

The last hour was truly spectacular. The trail gently sloped along the rim of the crater and took us past the giant blue wall of Rebmann glacier. We were higher than anywhere else in Africa, except the trail ahead, even higher than the plane that had brought us from Nairobi. The sky changed from indigo to bright pink to orange, and our moods improved.

Shortly after 6am and right at sunrise, we reached Uhuru Peak (5,895m [19,341ft]), the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and the highest point in Africa. We made it!

After all of the effort to get there, our time at the top was short. Although the sun helped, we were all very cold. After twenty minutes of photos and enjoying the view, we started back down the trail. The hike back to Barafu took about three hours, and, after an early lunch, we were back in our tents by 10am. We napped for an hour, then began our hike to Mweka Camp (3100m [10170ft]).

Surprisingly, it was these last two days that were the hardest physically for me. My boots were a bit loose in the heel which wasn't an issue walking uphill—but my feet moved about during the downhill bits and I ended up with huge blisters on both sides of both heels after the first descent day. We'd brought moleskin, but I struggled a bit. We arrived at Mweka late in the day, exhausted having been up since 11pm the previous night. But, Mweka Camp sells beer, so we couldn't sleep before another big dinner and a few Kilimanjaro Lagers.

Day 7, our last on Kili. Back in the rain forest, hiking was treacherous thanks to recent rains that had turned the trails into slick mud-chutes. We hiked about three hours down to Mweka Gate (1980m [6500ft]) where we signed out of the

park, received our certificates, and climbed back into the vans for the ride back to the Springlands Hotel in Moshi where hot showers and a cold beer were waiting.

The second part of the trip was a safari. We were shocked at
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Sarah...

cially Ojus. She ran in 160 races (which is a lot) and was in the adoption kennel for a year so she is already five years old. It's hard to believe she was up for adoption that long because she is so sweet and gorgeous. We are really happy to have her home for the holidays. Ojus seems happy too. He's been showing her the ropes.

Ojus is better than ever. He has really come out of his shell. He isn't afraid of For Sale signs moving in the breeze or rolling chairs anymore and he now frequently sleeps on his back with all four legs in the air and his tongue hanging out the side of his mouth. I think he's pretty comfortable here! It is truly a gift to have them both in our lives.

I love growing food! The garden is doing surprisingly great! It's amazing how much can be grown on such a small piece of property. Gardening has taught me so much about nature and the environment, nutrition and cooking, and about how much money can be saved by growing some food. I feel like a child every time I grow a new type of vegetable or fruit. I was so excited when I saw my first bunch of bananas forming and that first huge cucumber peak out from under the vines. I hope to start a community vegetable garden soon so others can learn and

be amazed by nature, start eating better (and avoid diabetes, depression, high blood pressure and other ailments that have a lot to do with nutrition), and also learn to watch their pocketbooks during these hard economic times. Nature is awesome. We don't use chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides and the yard has balanced out into a perfect little ecosystem. I really understand now why organic gardens work. Nature works. We have a healthy population of lizards that eat all the caterpillars and bugs in the garden before they eat very much of the vegetables and greens. The

spiders catch the mosquitoes and other flying bugs. The birds love to come eat the spiders and lizards. The butterflies are fluttering all around because we have caterpillar host plants, nectar

plants, and don't use poison. I feel like our yard is turning into a tropical paradise.

We are looking for a larger piece of land up in central Florida and hope to move there one day and grow a huge garden and have goats and chickens and bees and be as self sustaining as possible.

Brian's focus has been on music. He has been playing in a contra dance band with three other amazing musicians. They are all older (in their 50s) and have taken Brian under their wings. He's really enjoying it. He's learning a lot and these guys are so much fun. He plays the upright base and is getting really good! I love listening to their band play old time music. They have a regular monthly gig and sometimes play additional shows here and in other parts of Florida which is fun. I love a road trip and we get to explore different areas of Florida which



Sarah and Brian on one of their visits to Bradenton.

is great.

My big focus has been with a non-profit organization called Trash to Treasure. It is a creative reuse center with a goal to locate clean, re-usable material (before it goes to the landfill) and redistribute these items for educational and artistic purposes. It is awesome and I love the other people involved. We have a warehouse full of amazing materials that were all headed towards the dump. We get tons of fabric from an upholstery company, wood scraps from a stair manufacturer, old displays from stores, and tons of other odds and ends from the public. Trash to Treasure is just a perfect little place for me. I love art and design, but hated the consumption and wasteful aspects I saw while working in the fashion industry. At T2T we are constantly exploring ways to reuse and repurpose material. We have done a bunch of children's workshops where we teach kids about taking care of the planet. We do crafts and games using ordinary objects like bottle caps, scraps of fabric, cardboard tubes, and foam packing blocks to show them that it's just as easy to have fun and create with stuff normally discarded at home. I am taking a web design class and hope to make our Trash to Treasure website into an extensive resource of reuse and repurpose ideas for teachers and artists. We will see!!

Happy Holidays to you all!



Ojus and Bunny



Sarah with her first cabbage.

Barbara...

only six months of contemplation, I joined a weekly group in June. At the first meeting the leader asked me what type of writing I was doing. I enthusiastically told them of my plan to write my memoirs for our children and future grandchildren. I was met by polite smiles. Without further ado, I read my first sentence, "Up in the mountains of the Philippines, past where the paved road stopped, was a gravel road, which twisted its way up to rice terraces so old that no one knew their origin." People's faces livened up when they realized I was writing about an excursion to visit practicing headhunters, who were reached by traversing a one-lane road carved from a cliff, rather than the day I convinced my mother I was old enough for colored nail polish.

They liked the travel stories best, but found my essay on the trauma of having curly hair interesting. Their favorite part was when a new American barber in the Philippines, who was giving me a razor cut, informed me he had killed a man with a pool cue at age ten. I learned about Missouri capital punishment laws for children, as he applied bleach for highlights, using a new, painless method which didn't involve a bathing cap and crochet hooks. Foils

came much later, kids.

About then the power went off. When it went back on, we discovered my "highlights" had become a whole head of florescent orange locks. Remembering the pool cue story, I wisely kept my counsel and refrained from criticizing, using four letter Anglo-Saxon words, or asking if his training had been acquired at a Missouri correctional facility. He graciously offered, free of charge, to dye it back to brown the next day, af-

ter he drove to Manila to buy the dye. On a roll with my memoirs, I joined Anna Maria Island's Gulf Coast Writers in August. I'm learning from both groups and meeting interesting, talented people.

I decided to gloss over my third 2008 goal of physical fitness, since I rarely walk except from bed to my recliner in the TV room and the lounge on the lanai.

Frustrated that "goals" had not provided fertile writing material, I decided to follow the advice I had given to my students for forty-one years—brainstorm. Unfortunately, all I came up with were one-liners unsuitable for entire paragraphs. A contractor put solar panels on our roof to heat the pool. Boiling water poured down fire ant mounds kills them without unnecessarily polluting the environment. Thinking about nature led me to the countless joyful hours, Ed and I spend looking at the wildlife in our pond. As a native daughter of Indianapolis, home of the famed Indianapolis 500 auto race, and as a fan of the Triple Crown horse races, I decided on my topic: racing. You haven't lived until you've seen three turtles race across our pond to capture the wild grape that dropped off the vine into

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the water. Upon consideration, my enthusiasm for that topic cooled, as I decided that turtle racing, while intensely humorous in person, lost something in the retelling.

At another dead end, I returned to my slave driver for more suggestions. "Don't you write everything in your two-year planner?" he asked. "Maybe something there will jog your memory." I got to work flipping through the pages. Wow! Twelve whole months of filled-in blocks. With so much raw material I might have to categorize or ruthlessly eliminate. Upon closer inspection, I discovered that I had gotten my money's worth from Medicare and Blue Cross. I pondered whether multiple visits to ten doctors constituted a social life and an exciting "Barbara's Year".

I brought the subject up to my weekly writing group, as we ate finger food at our Monday meeting. Normally, we get right to the business of reading and critiquing each others' work and head home, but this week after a short session, we were eating holiday goodies and chatting. "I know I can't make multiple-visits to ten doctors screamingly funny, but do you think I could make it mildly amusing?" I asked. The professor from Illinois, a six-month snowbird who writes action/adventure thrillers that take place in Australia, looked like he didn't even understand the question. John, author of Sam Spade style 30's detective novels, expressed his opinion frankly. After John critiques my writing, I'm tempted to say, "Don't hold back, John, or "Tell me how you really feel?"

Three ladies, who made a pact with me to always say something positive after each reading, all had Goff Gazette suggestions. "Have you been out to dinner this year, Barbara? People might be interested in the varieties of local seafood," suggested Faye. "Maybe you

could work in a few memories of trips long ago," suggested Ardith earnestly. "Newspapers and television provide myriad ideas," said sweet-faced Annice. Yesterday, on Today, I saw that 75% of Americans believe in angels. Have you had any angel encounters? " she asked. "Muse on a valuable spiritual lesson you learned in a Christmas past," said Kathleen, the poet. John, who really is a great guy with valuable suggestions, ended with, "Keep it succinct....and remember, don't try to be funny. Some people don't have the knack for it."

By the next night, I had my valuable spiritual lesson with a medical theme, "Be careful what you wish for." I learned that a life without drama is a good thing. Be discriminating in wishing for a little excitement to report in a holiday letter. On Tuesday, one day after my writers' group meeting, I went in for "routine" cataract surgery.

When I can see again, I'm going to look up the secondary meanings of "routine". First, the anesthesia didn't work at all. I could feel every cut. Second, I was allergic to the eye medicine to reduce pressure. It caused spontaneous bleeding. Third, my cataract, which was tightly adhered under the lens shattered into my eyeball and one fragment pierced my retina.

The week before the surgery, since I was having both eyes done, I had asked the technician measuring for the right eye lens, why I couldn't have them both operated on at once. She looked surprised and said, "You want the other eye functioning if you go blind during or after the surgery. Infections are always a threat." Despite thinking I would have preferred euphemisms, I still had no concerns about the routine surgery or the pages and pages of fine print I had signed, which I couldn't read since I had two cataracts.

After my successful eyeball/retina surgery removing the offending pieces, I did have one more stroke of bad luck, good luck. The post op nurse at the hospital told me as she taped my eye patch in place, "Your skin looks delicate, so I've used paper tape."

I was sorry I had thanked her when the technician the next day said, "Why do you have paper tape? Taking it off will remove at least two layers of skin. This is really going to hurt." It did, but the skin underneath the layers, which came off with the tape, was as soft as a baby's. I don't think Medicare would have covered microdermabrasion.

My second valuable spiritual lesson is that Christmas miracles do exist. I'm incredibly grateful to the retina surgeon, who operated within twenty-four hours to fix the problem, and I'm grateful for the positive outcome, as my vision continues to clear.

So there you have it, my exciting first full year in retirement. Shoot! It's almost time for 2009 New Year's Resolutions. I think I'll work on swimming for physical fitness and a healthy diet of fruit. My goal will be to outrace the turtles in the pond for the wild grapes.

Family Website

The URL of the family website is: <http://goff-club.com/family/>. It is a password protected site so you'll need the user name and password in order to log in. Please email me, ed@goff.com, if you don't have that information.

You'll find photos, and past editions of *The Goff Gazette* on the site as well as useful information such as Address Books and a family medical chart that every family member should consult in order to better understand their genetic disposition to certain medical conditions

and to help them plan medical treatments and life styles that will better insure a long and healthy life.

You will also find links to photos, blogs, and websites of family members. Plans are in the works for a calendar of important family dates such as birthdays, anniversaries, and other special dates.

If you have links or information you would like added to the website, please email me. Denny set up a family website at one point, but the information on that site seems to have disappeared. If anyone knows where that information is or has historical photos we might post on the site, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Ed...

and before we returned. They did not leave a forwarding address so we continued to get their unpaid bills until we finally tracked them down in Reno, NV. Fortunately, we had their previous employer cosign the lease so we were able to negotiate with them and recoup much of our loss. By researching similar legal cases and by consulting friends and relatives (Thanks Patrick and Jim) we were able to avoid any legal expenses. It was, however, very educational but also very very time consuming. So career change number one – legal researcher/aid.

Our house wasn't our only property to suffer the wrath of tenants. I made a bad judgment by renting half of our duplex in Holmes Beach to two young men who promised me the world. Long story short: they trashed the place. I mean really trashed it. After cleaning it up (career change two – disaster recovery technician) I decided to remove the badly stained carpet and replace it with laminated flooring (career change three – laminated flooring installer). Several months later we rented it to a "nice" lady whose house had been foreclosed on. We felt

sorry for her, too sorry. She lasted two months and moved without telling us and without paying her rent. She left a lot of junk there, but didn't trash it. We finally rented it six months later to a nice young couple who are both gainfully employed and who always pay their rent on time, early sometimes... (Career change number four – real estate agent/manager).

The dock on our other rental duplex was fifteen years old and needed work so I got an estimate to replace it. Twenty-five thousand dollars seemed like too much, so I decided to repair it myself with a friend, Rod Collson. We replaced all the deteriorated planks with composite decking and added three more 2 x 8 support joists to each section of the sixty foot dock. (career change five – dock repair technician). It was hard work and it looked great but, at this writing, I am back working on the dock, this time replacing all the stringer 2 x 6s between the pilings with two 2 x 8s. It seems that the weight of the composite decking plus the additional weight of the new joists was too much for the 2 x 6s and they started to sag and crack. Not good. I guess I should have taken some courses in structural design....

Vegetation in Florida grows fast, too fast. For most of the summer I couldn't keep up. Finally, I discovered "weed block" which is a thin permeable sheet that you put down around plantings and cover with mulch or lava rock. This completely stops weeds from popping up overnight. So far they haven't popped up at all and I am finally making progress at getting rid of all our weeds. (Career change number six – gardener.)

I did have one major setback in my gardening, however. In early November I had surgery on my arm after I was attacked by a palm tree. I was cutting fronds off one of the palm trees in the front yard when I

was brutally attacked. It seems that this particular species of palm has rows of very long thorns (6+ inches) at the base of each frond. Since I was using an electric saw, I wasn't too concerned, just cut and watch them drop. Unfortunately, this one particular frond twisted as it fell and one of those very sharp thorns stuck into my right forearm going between the bones and almost all the way through my arm. The worst part though was that it broke off about a quarter inch below the skin. Needless to say, it really hurt. It was like someone had stabbed me with an ice pick, but didn't pull it out. Even the slightest movement of my hand or fingers hurt a lot. After x-rays and ultrasounds, it was determined that a hand specialist was my best option and he, Dr. Hand (really his name), told me the only option was surgery. This required a short stay in the hospital, use of an operating room, an arm tourniquet to cut off the blood supply to my arm during the surgery, and a local anesthetic. I could have had a general anesthetic but elected the local because there would be no recovery time. When the doctor had difficulty locating the thorn, I started second guessing my choice; but once it was over, I was happy. The relief was immediate when he removed the thorn and I even drove myself home. The doctor did a great job, and I only have a small scar.

OK – This is getting too long, but I've got to tell you about pool maintenance. We were paying \$80/month to have this lady come and "clean" our pool every week. She was only here about ten or fifteen minutes. I thought I could save a little money and do it myself so in April we discontinued the service. It is now December, and I think I've finally figured it out, but it wasn't easy. After several "algae blooms", black algae problems, cloudy water, low and high chlorine levels, pH imbal-

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ances, and filter problems, I think I now qualify as a certified pool maintenance technician (Career change seven).

We have concluded that our house is too small for our stuff. We could get rid of some of it, but we aren't ready for that yet. This is the first time we have had everything we own in our home with us so we want a few years to enjoy it. So, we are considering a "small" addition. I spent a couple hours today working on a possible design. (Career change eight – architect)

I have also been keeping up with my web design and maintenance "hobby". See <http://firebird-tours.com> and <http://goff-club.com>. I really enjoy this and hope to spend more time in 2009 in this pursuit and in expanding my skills.

We have really enjoyed staying home this year after many years of gallivanting around the globe. When most people retire, they want to "down size" and travel. We prefer to do just the opposite.

I did make three trips out of state this year. My sister, Dotty, passed away very suddenly and unexpectedly in April at the age of 62. I flew up to Elmira, NY, for her funeral. At the end of July we attended the annual Goff Reunion at Rainbow Cove on beautiful Seneca Lake, one of the Finger Lakes in Upstate, NY. Our third trip out of state was up to Indianapolis in August to attend Emelee Mitchum's wedding and visit Barbara's brother, Gary, and his wife, Renie.

Finally, for those who are curious, my running streak is still intact. On August 12th I finished twenty-eight years without missing a day. I'm not running as fast or as far as I did in my younger days, but I am still running about twenty-five miles a week. I will be increasing that soon, however, as I start training for the Tampa Gasperilla 15K which I finished in February in

1:24:29. I'll be in 65-70 age-group this February and hope to beat last year's time. Stay tuned...

Names From the Past

Last summer Connie (Ed's sister), mentioned Jim Mockler in an email. Jim and I were boyhood friends back in the 50's in Elmira, NY. Jim and I and another friend, John Dooley, were inseparable companions until high school when somehow we went our separate ways. I don't remember seeing either one of them since about 1960.

Anyway, Connie told me that Jim who lives in California was going to be in Elmira at the time of our family reunion at nearby Seneca Lake. I emailed Jim and we made arrangements to meet for lunch at his old family residence, which he now owns.

It had been almost fifty years since we last met so needless to say we had both changed considerably. Jim, though was still the old "Jimmy" I remembered from the 50's. We, along with Barbara, walked around the old neighborhood reminiscing those "good old days". When we walked out behind John's old house, the present occupant came out to find out what we were doing. After we explained, she invited us in to see how things had changed—not much.

Later as we passed by my old homestead which was for rent, Jim suggested we try the door. Although I was hesitant, we tried and it was unlocked so, of course, we all went in. Wow, what memories that brought back. It was especially interesting for Barbara since she had never been in that house.

After touring the rest of the neighborhood including Hoffman Creek and the flume, we headed back to Jim's house. I had no idea that Jim was a master chef and could prepare such a delicious meal. It was fantastic.

Before departing, we phoned John who lives in Reno, Nevada. We had a good chat and decided to meet sometime in the near future, and I promised to send both of them copies of the pictures I had taken.

As Barbara and I headed back up to the lake, it seemed sur-

real that after all these years Jim and I had gotten together again. I knew that it had been almost fifty years since we last met, but somehow it almost seemed like yesterday.



Jim and Ed meet after 50 years.

Visitors

We had a number of visitors this year including out-of-towners Sarah (Goff) & Brian Turk & Brian's parents, Richard & Dorothy; Larry & Tammy Webb (Barbara's cousin and his wife from Illinois) and daughter Jaclyn; Carol (Goff) & Bruce Beavers with Marlyn Goff; Doug & Brigitte Sommer (retired friends from Bitburg); Barbara's brother Gary; David & Barbara Gifford (David was in our wedding in Japan in 1973), David & Marla Gardner, cousin Joan (Hardiman) Roth; Rod & Bev Collson.

Other visitors included Judy (Ed's sister) & Jim Garen, Bill and Sara Ryskamp, longtime DoDDS friends and neighbors, Ben Cliff and Sarah Burns, also retired DoDDS friends, and Barbara's parents, Harold and Wilma Gardner. Hope I didn't miss anyone.

We are expecting John (Ed's brother) & Janice to visit in January

and Connie (Ed's sister) & Jim Young to visit in April. Larry & Carolyn Homan, who were best man and matron of honor in our wedding, are expected to visit in February. We also anticipate Kwajalein friend Ann Brown will visit while she is in the area this winter.

Two Dorothy's

We lost two very dear relatives this year. Ed's sister, Dotty, passed away very unexpectedly and very suddenly in April. She was only 62.

Dotty was a very kind and generous person. We have fond memories of our summer visits with her and Don. She was a fantastic cook and especially enjoyed sharing fresh vegetables from their garden. We had hoped that they would visit us in Florida so that we could, in some small way, reciprocate for her generosity over the years. I hope she knew how much we loved her, and how much we and dozens of other people mourn her passing. We miss her very much.

In July Barbara's Aunt Dorothy passed away. Barbara recalls, "If my Aunt Dorothy ever had an unkind thought about anyone, it never passed her lips. She was my special angel when, as a toddler during WWII, whenever my dad was transferred, my parents left me with grandparents until they could find housing and make it habitable. My grandparents' days were busy on the farm, so I played under the round oak table in the kitchen and watched Grandma make amazing food in her wood-burning stove. As an adult, I wish I could ask her how she managed to regulate the temperature for her fabulous pies."

"As the weeks seemed endless to a child, I got lonely. Aunt Dorothy would arrive on weekends, scooping me up in her arms, and brightening my world with her love

and infectious giggle. In later years she told me that one of the hardest things she had to do was pry my fingers one by one from her arms when she had to leave."

"She brought brightness and love to everyone in her life. I miss our angel on earth."

Wildlife

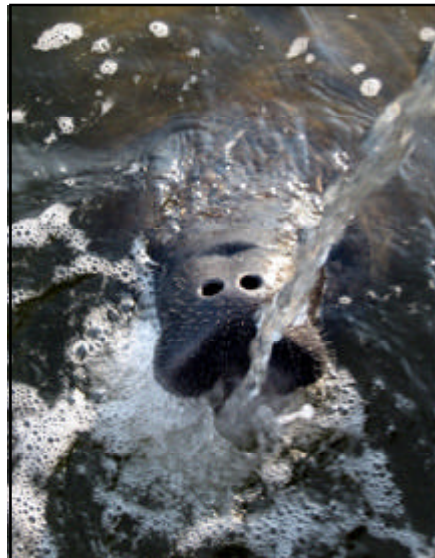
Living in America is a lot different than living overseas especially in Hawthorn Park, our subdivision in Bradenton, Florida. We expected to see a few birds and maybe a rabbit or two in our neighborhood, but we didn't expect the variety and numbers of animals that live here. The fact that there is a wildlife preserve and a botanical park within a half mile of our house may have something to do with it. We also live on a lake, actually a pond, which attracts numerous species of birds and other wildlife.

We especially enjoy the antics of the otters as they search for fish and other prey in the lake. It is also fun to watch the turtles as they sun themselves on the bank and as they "race" to retrieve wild grapes when they drop from vines in trees overhanging the lake. You haven't lived until you see a group of turtles compete to reach a fallen grape. It is somewhat akin to watching synchronized swimming in slow motion. The lake also attracts a large variety of birds including ducks, pelicans, cormorants, herons, and many others including American Eagles.

In addition to the omnipresent rabbits, we also have armadillos, racoons, and coyotes as fellow residents. The coyotes like to come into our yard at night to poop or at least it seems that way. We have never seen them there, but we sure do hear them when howl and yelp at night and, of course, we find their droppings in the morning. They mostly come out at night, but one ran out in front of me as I was running recently at 11:30 in the morning. When he saw me, he ran ahead of me but kept on looking back to see if I was still "chasing" him. When he turned right, I turned left and that was

the last I saw of him. Barbara and I also saw another coyote (different color) as we drove into the subdivision one afternoon.

If you like dolphins we have them, too, but not at our house in Bradenton. We see them out at our place on Anna Maria Island which is located in a bird sanctuary on Bimini Bay. We have seen at least two different



*Manatee off our dock getting a drink of fresh water from the hose.
Photo by Sarah.*

species of dolphins. Manatees have learned to come to our dock for a drink of water. Since the bay water is brackish they like to drink the fresh water from the hose.

In-State Travel

One of the big benefits of living in the States is that we get to visit our relatives (and vice versa) more often. Barbara's parents live less than forty-five minutes away so we

(Continued on next page.)

have visited them frequently. My sister Judy and her husband Jim moved to Palmetto, FL, a year ago. Their house is only fifteen miles from ours so we have gotten together regularly. They even came to our house for Thanksgiving as did Sarah and Brian (and Brian's parents) who live in Pompano Beach, about four hours away.

Carol and Bruce, my sister and her husband live in Cocoa, FL, over on the "Space Coast", less than three hours away. Barbara's Uncle, David and her Aunt Marla live in Spring Hill about a hundred miles north of us. We have not been able to get together with them as often as we had hoped due to illness, but we plan on getting up there in the near future.

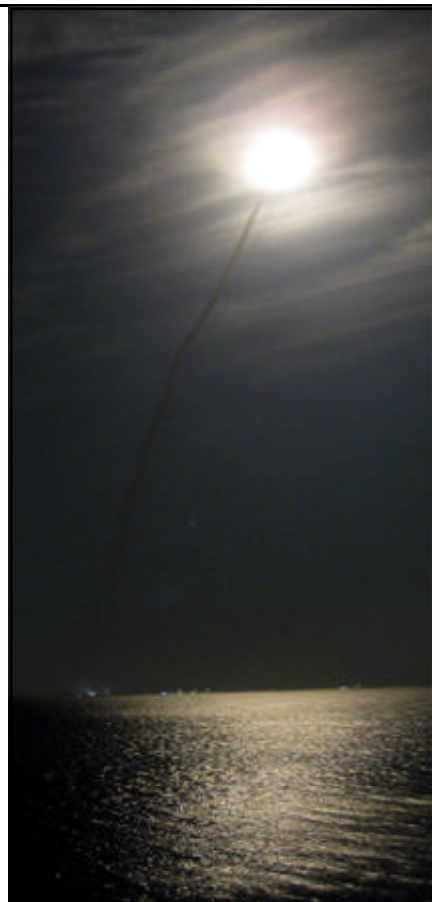
My cousin, Joan Hardiman Roth, lives in Sebring, less than two hours east of here. We visited her with Jim and Judy in October. It had been approximately fifty years since I last saw Joan and amazingly she has not changed very much.

Judy & Jim, Carol & Bruce, and Barbara and I plan to get together every month or so at some "new" location in Florida just to explore a new area and to visit.

Shuttle Launch

In November we journeyed over to visit Carol and Bruce in Cocoa. The main purpose of the trip was to watch the nighttime launch of the Space Shuttle Endeavor. We were not disappointed as it took off right on schedule in a blaze of light that lit up the night sky and a delayed roar from its engines. Carol and Bruce had scoped out the perfect viewing site only a few miles from the Cape, and we arrived about two hours early in order to insure an unobstructed view.

We were joined by Judy & Jim and Mary (Garen) & Don Mathew along with their son, Bran-



Shuttle launch from Cape Canaveral.

don. The time before the launch passed rapidly as we socialized in the balmy Florida night. We hadn't seen Don for many years, and it was great to see him again especially since he recently returned from Iraq. Brandon, whom we had only met once before, is a fine young man.

Matt cont. from p.4...

how close we were able to approach the animals: monkeys, giraffe, zebra, lions, tigers, leopard, cheetah, and all manner of birds. This part of the trip was definitely more relaxing and felt more like vacation (sleeping in beds for the first time in a week probably helped).

2008 is wrapping up soon, and we are spending the holidays in London. Valerie's aunt, uncle, and two cousins from France are coming to stay with us for four days to visit and see the city. We are look-

ing forward to the time off and enjoying typical English holiday fare, minced pies and mulled wine.

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We also have Skype and Facebook accounts. The Skype account has been especially useful for chatting, talking, and videoing overseas. If you haven't tried Skype, you may want to give it a try, especially if you have growing youngsters who live far away. In addition, we also have Flickr accounts for photos and blogs on blogspot.com.

Last year's Goff Gazette, in case you missed it, may be viewed at <http://goff-club.com/Gazette07.pdf>.

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