

The Goff Gazette

Volume 25

Bradenton, Florida

December, 2009

Greetings and Best Wishes

Once again we come to you from sunny Florida. We hope you had a very happy holiday and that 2010 brings you prosperity and the best of health. As we embark on this 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.

Barbara Muses

The most exciting event of our year was Matt's marriage to Valérie Morgan in October. It's really their story, but it's ours, too. The week before the wedding several members of Valérie's family arrived.

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



Sarah and Brian Turk

Ed and Barbara

Valérie and Matt Goff

Sarah's Busy Year

Not much has changed in suburbia. We have a few more vegetable beds. Our fruit trees are a couple feet taller. And, we have twice as much dog poop in the backyard. Bunny, our seconded adopted greyhound has settled in nicely. It makes me happy that Ojus has someone to chase around the yard now.

I've become even busier with our creative re-use center, Trash to Treasure. Our mission is to keep valuable art materials from going to the landfill. We get donations from individuals and businesses who normally would throw away this material. It is stuff that a thrift store would also throw away...bits and pieces of crayons, fabric scraps from upholstery places (sometimes these scraps are whole bolts), pieces of plastic, bottle caps, wood scraps, Styrofoam coolers from labs, etc. We sort and organize all the little bits and pieces in our warehouse and

(Continued on p. 2, Sarah...)

Ed's Retirement

Life is good. Matt and Valérie got engaged in Paris in February, moved to Bradenton, Florida, where we live, in June, bought a house only five miles away in August, and got married in October. Sarah and Brian are still living in Pompano Beach with their two wonderful greyhounds. Barbara has undergone a series of "radio frequency" treatments that have relieved her of much of the pain that has plagued her for years and she joined Weight Watchers and is making steady progress. I am still running every day and I'm making plans to start my long-time goal of becoming an inventor.

I spend much of my time managing and maintaining our rental properties and doing things around our house. Barbara wants me to build an arbor for our passion fruit vine which has taken over most of the screened cage that surrounds our pool. I also plan to put some deck-

(Continued on p. 2, Ed...)

Matt & Valérie Marry

In 2008, we enjoyed many, fun trips to Europe and Africa. What 2009 lacked in travel it more than made up in life events!

In February, I surprised Valérie with a trip on the Eurostar to Paris where I proposed in the gardens of the Palais de Chaillot, overlooking the Eiffel Tower. As you probably know, she accepted! The rest of the trip was filled with the usual tourist activities: visiting museums, enjoying some great meals, and mixing with the locals as much as possible.

In May, after a little more than two years in London, we decided that we were ready to settle down a bit and moved back to Bradenton, FL. I was able to continue in my same job, working for CBS Interactive, as a full-time telecommuter. My parents generously offered to let us stay at a rental property they have on Anna Maria Island while we searched for a house.

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

Sarah...

make them available to the public. I think it's the best art store I've ever been to, but some people seem to just see trash.

One way we are trying to help people see it differently is we have



Bunny and Ojus with Santa

opened a boutique in the front room called Zen of Scrap to showcase up cycled products. Everything sold there is made from 100% reused or repurposed materials. It's pretty amazing to see the creativity!

We have also started a garden at Trash to Treasure to showcase reuse in the garden. We have creative container gardens, raised beds, fences, compost bins, rain barrels, and trellises all made from stuff originally headed for the landfill.

For work I'm doing freelance web design, which I enjoy a lot. I'm still learning. I do the website for Trash to Treasure (www.trash2treasurefl.org) and several others (www.sarahgoff.com).

I'm also doing costume design now for a production of Snow White which has been super fun. It's nice to get away from the computer for awhile. The guy I am working for traveled with The Lion King for six years and is very talented. He has a lot of projects lined up so I hope to be do-

ing more costuming in the future. Plus, he is very supportive of my insistence that we only buy used materials. The set, costumes, and props for Snow White are all 75% recycled!

Brian has been very busy with his old-time band. They are getting gigs all over town now! (www.ontheflystringband.com) He has also joined the Broward Symphony Orchestra which he is really enjoying.

We are still dreaming of and looking for our farm outside of Gainesville. We want enough space to have goats, and chickens, and bees. We did a farm internship several months ago which was very interesting. We are hoping to do one at a different organic farm a couple hours north of here soon. I guess I'll be telling you all about it next year...or maybe I'll be telling you about our farm!?

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season!! Peace!

Ed...

ing in the attic to provide space for things like Christmas decorations.

One of my immediate goals is to improve my finish time in the Gasperilla 15K (9.3 mile) run in Tampa which is scheduled for February 27th. In 2008 I did it in 1:24:28 and came in 26th in my division (60-64). Last year I moved to the 65-69 age group and finished in 1:21:37 and came in 12th in my division. This year my goal is to finish in less than 1 hour and 20 minutes. In order to improve my endurance, I have already bumped up my twice-weekly long runs to 8 miles. I also plan to lose ten pounds or so. We'll see...

At this writing my running streak is still intact. If I can keep it going, I will finish year thirty on August 12th, 2010. For those who may not know, I have run every day, without ever missing a day, since August, 1980. I am presently ranked 51st by the United States Streak Runners Association which means that 50 people in the U.S. have longer streaks.

We have had quite a few visitors this year many of whom came from out of state. I was especially

happy that some of my siblings visited us for the first time here in Florida. Living overseas for thirty-seven years made it very difficult previously. Older brother Dave visited in conjunction with the wedding, John and Janice visited in January, and Connie and Jim visited in April. Sisters Judy and Carol who live in Florida also visited us again with their spouses Jim and Bruce respectively. A "complete" list of out-of-state visitors may be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Also, see our mini-reunions article about Kwaj and DoDDS friends.

Unlike most retirees, we prefer to stay at home rather than travel but we did venture to Upstate New York twice this year. First, in July we went to the annual family reunion at Seneca Lake and in September we attended the wedding of niece Robyn in Watkins Glen, NY. Both times we were hosted by John and Janice at their lake cottage, "Buttercup". It was really nice to see everyone at both events, especially those whom I had not seen in many years. Before Robyn's wedding, we stopped in Rochester and met up with Tony Panzica with whom I shared an apartment during my first two years of teaching. It had been many, many years since we last visited with Tony and Diane; and we had a wonderful time catching up and made plans to meet this winter in Florida. We also took a side trip to see Nancy and Fred Goris, my oldest sister and her husband, in Angola, NY. Nancy is not well so we only stayed a couple of hours but that was long enough to share some good memories.

We have been looking for a boat, actually two. First, we want a pontoon boat so we can explore all the waterways and canals of Anna Maria Island and up the Manatee River. We also plan to frequent Egmont Key which is a nearby state park only accessible by boat. Second, we are looking for a sailboat. We think a 22 to 24 footer might be fun. We owned a sailboat with the Homans in Japan back in the early 70's and yearn to once again experience the freshness and harmony of sailing. There is nothing like gliding through the water propelled by a gentle breeze and with only the rustle of the sails and the lapping of the water against the hull.

Barbara...

We were delighted to discover that they were as lovely as Valérie. We had fun with dinners at the beach, a swim in our pool, dinner at the historical home that Matt and Valérie had purchased, and the other wedding festivities.

We had the good fortune to meet Valérie's mother, Cathy, in the summer on her way to the Dominican Republic to visit her eldest daughter, Stephanie and family. Nathalie, the second in line, lives in Greenville, SC with her husband, Ira. Valérie, the youngest, now lives in Bradenton, much to our surprise and joy. (Surprise, because Matt moved from London to Bradenton to work for his company remotely.) The three intelligent, charming, beautiful sisters worked together, as though they were reading each other's minds. Ron, their father, and his gracious finance, Anne, live in Winston-Salem, the girls' home town. The week before the wedding with the Morgan clan, the wedding, and the week after of Kwaj reunion, were the best two week's I've had since we returned to the States. With Valerie's expert planning, we enjoyed the fun week together, a wonderful bridal luncheon given by her sisters at our vacation home on Anna Maria Island, a rehearsal dinner at their house, so visitors could see their new home, the wedding at the Sandbar on the beach, and a delicious dinner with dancing in the wedding pavilion also on the beach.

Matt's godfather, Larry Homan and his wife Carolyn, best man and matron of honor in our wedding in Japan many years ago, came from Nevada City, California. Their lovely four-bedroom condo on the bay at Longboat Key began rocking when they were joined by Ken and Eula Jourdan and Walt and Becky Chidsey. We joined them after the wedding for a week of sun, sand, great food, and rollicking games of Yahtzee. Our neighbors were probably happy to see us go. Having a Kwaj mini-reunion helped avoid a let-down after the wedding festivities.

After years of writing on student papers and yakking about wanting to write a book, I've finally got two in progress. I warmed up with sto-

ries of overseas travels, followed by a mystery for middle school students. I'm letting the memoirs mellow, while I finish the novel. I completed Chapter 23 yesterday and shared it with my encouraging writers' workshop, which meets at the State College of Florida, a new four-year-school, which previously was Manatee Community College. We meet weekly, so that gives me the push I need.

The Gulf Coast Writers meet monthly at the Anna Maria Island library. They are a distinguished group of mostly former professors, who have written everything from a nursing textbook in its sixth printing, Time magazine articles for 41 years, humorous columns in two newspapers, plays, musicals, biographies, and autobiographies. Despite their experience, they are encouraging me by roaring with laughter over our experiences like buying a boat and sailing down Tokyo Bay, with only The Little Golden Book of Sailing as a guide. I was afraid two of them would die of heart failure when I told them of sailing immediately in front of an oil tanker, assuming that our little sailboat had right of way. We weren't worried because The Little Golden Book of Sailing assured us that boats under sail had right of way. We are living proof that God watches over sailing fools.

Besides the joys of writing, I've finally gotten back to stamping and painting. I missed my craft kitchen in our German house and couldn't get enough space in the bedroom I'm using, which also has our guest bed. I asked Ed if he would mind if I'd move out to the dining room table for a week before our semi-annual community garage sale. What a blast! I think it's my therapy like running used to be. I listen to books on disk from the library and paint away.

Amazingly, after an incredible Thanksgiving dinner with my 89-year-old father, my 88-year-old mother, Matt and Sarah and their spouses, Valérie and Brian, he agreed that I could continue to bring my stamps out for projects. He even encouraged me by buying plastic sleeves to protect my cards and a laminator for bookmarks for my birth-

day. I'm thrilled.

Life couldn't be better with Ed, my parents nearby, Matt and Valérie fifteen minutes away, and Sarah and Brian in Pompano Beach, a four-hour drive. Well,....actually it could be better if they lived about fifteen minutes away, too. I have season tickets to Florida Studio Theater and the Asolo, so I'm getting my "fix" of music and drama.

Five doctors, ten sessions with general anesthetic for radio-frequency on my spine, a suitcase of pills, and I'm like new. Ed and I are looking for another kayak or a double, a sailboat, and a pontoon boat. We have biking expeditions all figured out. I'm getting stronger every day. The world's greatest husband, good friends, healthy family, creative pursuits, and a beautiful place to live, I feel blessed in every way.

The Goff Gazette was delayed when I had my gall bladder attack at 4 AM on New Year's Day. What a way to begin the year and decade. Next time I need to lose an organ, I'll choose a better day. I think I might have been the only person in the ER, who hadn't gotten into trouble through drinking, which led to guns, knives, or crashes. I recovered quickly and all is well. Ed took great care of me.

I'm looking forward to a fun-filled year as, if all goes well, we'll be boat owners next week. Ya'll come.

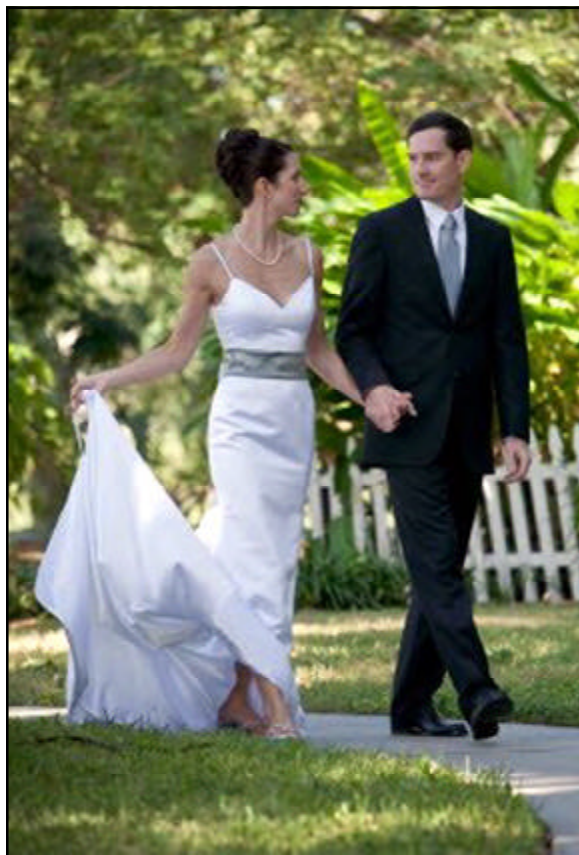
Le Cirque des Petits Chats

Rocky flung himself into space landing strategically on the wrestling Domino, No Name, and Inkwel. Unbeknownst to him Cutie had been stalking his switching tail, anticipating his move, she was airborne in tandem. Sweet Pea looked at the swirling mass of fur before she daintily leapt in the middle, not wanting to be left out. On cue, six little kittens launched out in six directions. Two seconds of visual reconnaissance. Rocky was on the Japanese chest, Domino on the DVD player, No Name on the left speaker, Inkwel on the rattan chair, Cutie under the table, and Sweet Pea on the magazine basket. A split second later the

(Continued on p. 4, Cats...)

Matt...

After more than a month of hunting, we found a fabulous old house in the River District in Bradenton and closed on it in August. The house was built in 1910 and has many of the original, craftsman details. Al-



Valérie and Matt on their wedding day.

though it's in relatively good shape, it's going to require a lot of work over the next few years to get it completely renovated—I guess we have our weekends planned!

Not satisfied with the whirlwind of moving, house hunting, and car buying, we also planned our wedding which was held on October 18th on Anna Maria Island. We'd heard it many times, but it's true that your own wedding is a whirlwind, and I wish I had been able to spend more time with all of our guests. Everything came together with help from both families, and we had a great time. It was a close call, but the weather even cooperated!

We wrapped up the year with a Christmas trip to the Dominican Republic. Valérie's sister Stéphanie and her family live in Santo Domingo, and we, along with Valérie's mother

Cathy, enjoyed some time with them at their house before heading up to Las Galeras where Cathy had rented a house at the beach for all of us. Florida, like most of the US it seems, has been unseasonably cold, so it was nice to have some time in the sun and away from all of our house projects.

But, now we're back and the work must go on! Happy New Year!

Cats...

cats were flying, as Ed turned to me and I said, "Who needs Vegas when we have Le Cirque des Petit Chatz right here at home." Where was mama cat in all this action? She had staked out an isolated spot in the entertainment center. Smart mama.

How did a mild-mannered, retired couple living in paradise find themselves in the middle of these feline acrobats, well....

When Valerie and Matt arrived home the day after their wedding, the feral cat under their new home had presented them with a wedding day gift—six kittens! We loved going to see them, as each day they performed, new adorable tricks. With some misgivings about our not kitten-proofed house, we prepared to catsit the family, while Matt and Valerie were gone for two weeks over Christmas.

Staging area one was the hallway and guest bathroom, complete with litter box, two comfy carriers, a bottomless box on a blanket, food, water, and toys. Area Two was our den, which we discovered every two minutes had not been as cat-proofed as we thought. Slowly, the chair cushions were removed followed by a Philippine Negrito blowgun, which happened to have attached feathers. Bookshelves were rearranged to stop marauding kittens from climbing too high. Nothing could be done to protect the wires except non-stop kitten sitting. Mama was a

wonderful mother, attentive to her exhausting brood. We gave her two long breaks each day and tried to protect her when she got in her perches in the den. Before long, however, the flying circus of kittens managed to use Ed and me as roads to the entertainment center and their best hideaway. Even patient mama got perturbed when the kittens found her favorite window sill and thought the blinds above her head were jungle gyms expressly built for them. When all six jumped on her switching tail, we introduced her to the lanai. She instantly climbed to the top screen, where she discovered there was no way out. A quick learner she never tried that again and even discovered that hidden in the ferns behind the hot tub, she had a panoramic view of the pond and green belt, which was full of interesting birds, squirrels, and geckos. She needed the break and stayed happily for the afternoon.

My break came unexpectedly at 4 AM on January 1st, when I awoke with horrible stomach and abdominal cramps, and vomiting. Since I hadn't even had a glass of champagne for New Year's Eve, I thought I must have gotten food poisoning. Finally, about 1 PM, I told Ed that I needed help. After a call to the Blue Cross Nurse line, I went to urgent care and was quickly passed along to Manatee Memorial Hospital, where I had my gall bladder out. We hadn't anticipated not going home, so Mama was on her kitten break, with the kids in the hall. Ed raced home to reunite them. All was well.

He entertained me on his hospital visits with tales of the growing, ever curious and inventive kittens. When I got home, he seated me in a chair, so I could see the new trick, which resembled the running of the bulls at Pamplona. He stood to the side, slid open the hall door, and out came the kittens and Mama, literally flying. The only other way to describe it is when the home team jumps through the paper barrier onto the field.

I've always been a dog person, but I've got to admit these kittens are entertaining. So here we are retired, crazy cat people!