

The Goff Gazette

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Front Row: Sarah, Grandpa Gardner, Grandma Gardner holding Amélie, and Valérie Back Row: Brian, Barbara, Ed, and Matt

Matt Builds

By far the biggest event of the year was the birth of our daughter, Amélie Lucie Morgan Goff, on November 14th, 2011 at 6:01pm. As I write this, she is seven weeks old and is doing great. Valérie and I are adjusting to the new normal of parenthood, but all things considered she is a very easy and happy baby. We were greatly helped during the first month by Valérie's mom, Cathy Morgan, who came down from her home in Winston-Salem, NC, to give us an extra set of hands.

Before Amélie arrived, the big project for the year was home renovation. We broke ground on a garage and laundry room addition in the Spring and had crews in and out through the end of the Summer. We

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

Sarah Homesteads

We love Gainesville and the community we have found here. We love all the nature up in North Florida and we really love our land! I used to visualize the perfect property: old oak trees with Spanish moss blowing in the breeze, some woods, and an open field perfect for a large vegetable garden. Somehow my dream came true! We found a beautiful 10 acre piece of land at the end of a dirt road, just a few miles from downtown Gainesville and very close to the bike trail into town. It takes me 15 minutes to ride my bike into Gainesville. I have a huge garden, over 50ft x 50ft. We eat fresh vegetables from it every day and even sell extra at the farmers market in town. We have great neighbors. Our

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

Our Year

2011 was filled with a series of medical events that included broken bones, replaced joints, hospital stays for young and old, two departing relatives, and the joyous birth of our first grandchild.

Barbara Recovering

The biggest life event for me was the birth of Amélie, Matt and Valerie's daughter, born November 14th, our long awaited first grandchild. We anticipate a wonderful year of getting to know her as we watch her grow and develop.

Another life event was Nick Gardner and Terren's spectacular wedding in Indianapolis in June. We had great fun with them, my brother, Gary, his wife, Maureen and daughters Abby and Amanda, and her friend, Kolby. The rehearsal dinner high above the city lights was beautiful and took me back to my roots in

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

Ed Runs

I have a theory. As one gets older, time speeds up. It doesn't just seem to speed up. It really does. It has to do with relativity, gravity, and the expanding universe. That is why 2011 went by so fast.

It was an eventful year, but the biggest event occurred late in the year when our first grandchild, Amélie Lucie Morgan Goff, was born on November 14th to Matt and Valérie. She, of course, is the most beautiful baby ever born.

Medical problems plagued us this year. I started the year with back problems that interrupted my long distance training, but I managed to keep my running streak going in spite of the discomfort. I did, however, reduce my distance to 1.2 miles/day for a week and eventually worked my

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

Barbara...

my old home town. We even managed to squeeze in a quick trip to see Harlene and Dan Mitchum's new home. Their daughter Emelee and her husband, Scott, visited so we could meet their darling baby son, Hudson.

The third set of life events surprised us with the quickness and volatility, as Mom fell and broke her hip, Dad fell and followed her to Sarasota Memorial Hospital, while she went to rehab. Before he could join her, she was sent back to SMH, where, within an hour, she experienced a heart attack with her three main heart arteries closed 100%, 95%, and over 80%. Since she was 90 years old, her excellent cardiac doctor put a stent in the totally blocked one instead of doing open heart surgery. Within a few days she was stable enough for two more, and with a little more time still two others. I found myself visiting the hospital or rehab every day for weeks until they happily returned home.

A fall I had many years ago on Kwajalein led to more falls—ankle and knee surgery and ultimately shoulder replacement. The other needs replacing, too, but not until the first is fully healed. Ed became my advisor, nurse, cook, and laundry man. In short, he was a trooper, while I focused on physical therapy. I'm doing extremely well with range of motion, but still working on enough muscle power to peel potatoes.

Fortunately, I had no problem with writing novels on my computer after the first two weeks. I put my travel memoir on the back burner, along with my middle school mystery, as my new writing partner kept me busy with our paranormal, serial killer/cop series taking place in Bradenton, Florida. In October, I attended the Florida Writers Association conference, where one agent said the genre was urban fantasy. Another said it was paranormal, romantic suspense. In any case, I did have an agent who wanted to look at the first one. Unfortunately, my time has been consumed with my own physical therapy and taking Mom and Dad to doctor's appointments. I am attempting my last revision with a goal

of sending it by the end of the week.

I have no illusions about getting published. It's like wanting to be a rock or movie star, but it's incredibly fun. I also spoke with an agent, who wants to see half of my travel memoir, and another agent who wants to see my middle school mystery when I get it finished. That's the first step.

Scott Brown, a former student in my 10th grade English class on Kwajalein, came for a visit last spring and another this November. He attended a conference in Orlando and stopped with us for a week to do book signings in the area and visit. The November trip was arranged and paid for by a grant so he could speak to a class at the State College of Florida, which had recently studied his first book! While here he also did a book signing. He's published with three of the six major publishers: Random House, Penguin, and Simon and Schuster. He's a terrific author and person, so his visits are a joy.

My social life outside Ed's and my friends is a season pass to the Asolo Theater, a professional repertory company, in Sarasota. DoDDS teacher friends meet and lunch at Capt. Brian's, a great seafood restaurant, and then attend the plays. We also have season's passes to Florida Studio Theater's Cabaret and Main Stage productions. Next, year we're only attending the Cabaret as our retired lives are too busy to keep up with each other's schedules!

Our best holiday was Thanksgiving. We were thankful to have Sarah and Brian down from Gainesville, Valerie and her mother Cathy, Matt, and Amélie, Mom and Dad, and Ed and me all together. We took four-generation pictures and enjoyed a fabulous dinner and rare time together.

Matt...

hired pros to do the concrete, framing, siding, roofing, and drywall. I did all of the electrical and plumbing work and had to pull some double-shifts to make sure I stayed ahead of the crews and keep us on schedule.

The pros are now all done, and Valérie and I are working on the final interior work, flooring, painting, trim and cabinets, and hope to be (finally!) done in January. Next up, kitchen and back porch! Follow along with our progress at <http://mattgoff.net/rb/>

I am still working at CBS Interactive in corporate finance. I'm in my third year as a telecommuter, and I can barely remember life as an office worker, much less the 90 mile round-trip commute I had when I lived in San Francisco! Valérie was working for Bealls Inc as a Merchandise

Planner but resigned in December after we decided that we'd prefer for her to stay home with Amélie.

We didn't do much vacation traveling this year, but managed to squeeze in five weddings this summer: Valérie's cousin David Morgan got married in Columbus, OH, followed by my cousin Nick Gardner in Indianapolis, IN, followed by good friends Scott Sappenfield and Lisa Robinson in Detroit, MI— on three consecutive weekends! Two months later we were in San Francisco for the wedding of another good friend and one of my groomsmen, Matt Spuller. Valérie (eight months pregnant!) left the reception and caught a red-eye to NC for the wedding of one of her best friends and bridesmaid, Jessica Forrest. Not sure how much of that we'd be able to pull off with Amélie, but we just applied for her passport so I guess we'll see!

Happy 2012!



Amélie

Sarah...

dogs love it out here. I feel so fortunate.

It was a pretty wild beginning though! It was 20 degrees the first night we slept on our land in Gainesville last January. The timing of our move was not in our hands, it was up to the bank and the people buying our home. We learned of the closing date and rushed to pack all of our belongings in time. Directly after the closing, we started driving. Our plan was to find a travel trailer we could move to our property to live

in. We drove a c r o s s Florida several times looking at trailers posted on craigslist without luck. Finally, we decided to buy a little propane heater for the van and headed to Gainesville.

We knew it was going to be cold! We spent the next three months living in our van with our two big greyhounds and a lot of blankets to keep warm! Even though most of our comforts were

gone, it was actually an amazing time. We were so excited to have our land. We had no electricity, internet, or TV so we spent our evenings reading and listening to music or the coyotes yipping in the distance. Not much could be done after dark! In the mornings we would swing open the van doors to see bucks and wild turkeys. Over the weeks and months, we slowly got more comfortable. We got our well working so we had running water. A neighbor lent us a composting toilet.



Sarah and Brian in their tree house on their property. This is not where they live.

We bought a little camping propane water heater and made an outdoor shower. We installed an outlet so we could use electricity...and finally we moved into a 1955 Spartan Imperial Mansion travel trailer!

It's been a really great and exciting year, but it hasn't been all perfect. We had to do a short sale in order to sell our home so we lost all that we had invested in it. I had a miscarriage which was disappointing to say the least. We are underemployed and without health insurance and have repeatedly been denied health care even though we assure doctor's offices that we will pay

them ahead of time in cash. But all of these hardships are ok.

I know I have it so much better than most. I am thankful for our land and our simple life. I love it that even though our resources are slim right now, we eat organic and healthy vegetables every day from our garden. I love it that I can ride my bike everywhere. I love my angelic greyhounds. I feel so fortunate

to be in a loving and stable 12-year-long relationship with my sweet husband, Brian. And finally, I am so thankful for my family and my new little niece!

Ed...

way back up to over 8+ mile runs every few days in preparation for the Gasperilla 15K, which I finished in late February. Not my best time but,

considering my curtailed training, I was happy.

My brother, Dave, had a lung transplant in October, 2010 and I became the "contact person" for the family. I talked with him almost daily and sometimes several times a day and reported his condition via email to our extended family. When he reached the six month milestone of recovery, we were very encouraged; but then while in Pittsburgh in May for a "post transplant" checkup, he suffered a pulmonary embolism and passed away within twenty-four hours. He put up a great fight, and I am sure his experience will help future transplant patients. I miss him a lot.

Barbara, after suffering from increasing arthritic pain in her right shoulder for many years, finally had shoulder replacement surgery in July. Of all the joint replacement surgeries, this one is the most complicated and debilitating. She is doing very well now, but for the first few months I became the chief nurse and house maid. I think I became quite a good cook, but the house is still suffering from lack of attention.

Much of the past few months has been spent with Barbara's parents who have been in and out of the hospital with serious medical problems. At 90 and 91 they are still living at home and are doing amazingly well.

In December, after a very long illness, my oldest sister, Nancy, passed away. She was a very happy and cheerful person. In spite of her extended illness, I never heard her complain even once. We will miss her very much.

I spent quite a bit of time working around the house making improvements. I installed a "cat door" through a cement block wall so our wonderful cats, Cutie and Sweet Pea, would have the freedom to go out to the lanai and back when they wanted (and we wouldn't have to stop what we were doing to open the door). I also built a bookcase under the kitchen counter, replaced screens in the pool cage, and

painted the deck.

I got more ambitious at our rentals on Anna Maria Island doing numerous minor and major projects including wiring the new boat lift, installing glass doors on a bathtub, putting in a new vanity with a granite top (cutting the granite was interesting) and replacing a fuse box with a circuit breaker box. I have discovered that I enjoy doing these projects myself rather than having them hired out. It also saves a lot of money.

The boat has turned out to be a lot of fun, but there have been times when I wondered who owned what; me the boat or the boat me. I have learned a lot about reading the wind and waves, making mechanical and electrical repairs and paying handsome sums for others to fix what was beyond me. Nonetheless, we

enjoy our times on the water - especially when we have guests along.

We only took a few trips this year, one in April up to South Carolina for a family "Spring Fling" in Myrtle Beach



Cutie Pie and Sweet Pea

which was hosted by Jeannette and Jim McConnell at their new beach home. We stopped to see Sarah and Brian in Gainesville on the way. My second trip was to Dave's funeral in Elmira, NY in May. Although it was a sad occasion, the traditional Irish wake was good therapy for everyone. In June we flew up to Indianapolis for Barbara's nephew's wedding. It was a grand event. Bride, Terren, was beautiful and Nick, was very handsome. We even got to meet Coach Stevens of the Butler Bulldogs. Nick is a former player and the current "color commentator" for the team. As a bonus we were able to visit our good friends from DoDDS days, the Mitchums, Dan & Harlene, as well as their daughter, Emelee, husband, Scott, and their new baby, Hudson. In December I flew to Buffalo to attend my oldest sister's, Nancy's, funeral in Angola, NY. Once

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again it was wonderful to see family and friends, but sad to spend New Year's Eve at her funeral.

Finally, my running streak is still intact. Now in year 32 without missing a day. I hope to keep it going as long as I'm physically able.

2012

As we start the year 2012 we wish all our friends and relatives all the best. We hope your dreams come true and your health is better than ever.

We know not what the year will bring but we do know that we have been blessed with friends and relatives who will stand by us in good times and bad. For this we are very grateful.



Our pontoon boat.



Manatee getting a drink of fresh water at our dock.