

The Goff Gazette

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Back row: Brian, Barbara, Ed, Matt
Front row: Sarah & Betsy, Grandma & Grandpa Gardner, Valérie & Amélie

Barbara's 2012

What's with the 14th?

When Ed and I were teaching, our "new year" meant August. January 1st paled as a distant second until we retired. This year began on November 14th, 2011, when our first granddaughter, Amélie, joined us in the world making Matt, a dad; Valerie, a mom; us, grandparents; my parents, "great"; and Sarah, a genetic aunt! On August 14th, Betsy was born; and Sarah became "Mom", Brian "Dad", Matt, an uncle by blood, and the rest of us doubly grand and great. Our granddaughters were worth the wait! We found, along with our friends before us, that grandchildren are the most beautiful, precocious, charming, delightful
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Matt & Valérie

If 2011 was the year of "new" (new baby, new renovation), 2012 was the year of "progress."

Amélie celebrated her first birthday in November 2012. She's been a great baby: good eater, good sleeper, and almost always happy.

She started walking in her 10th month and quickly progressed to running (and us to chasing). She's babbling her head off now, so if the past is any indication, she'll say her first words before too much longer.

What little time we have left is devoted to the continuing renovation of our 1910 home. We did manage to eventually finish the garage and laundry room. As with most work on this house, we ran into delays. In this case, matching the flooring, baseboards, and trim was a chal-

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Sarah & Brian

The morning before I went into labor, I heard a little girl's voice. "Hello?" It was a question as if she was seeing if anyone was around. I had just woken up....I mean I thought I was awake...but... was it a dream?

Weird. When Brian woke up a couple minutes later, I told him that I thought we might be having a little girl. Everyone up until that point, including us, had been guessing a boy.

I went into labor that afternoon and four, long sleepless days later, I heard that little girl's voice squeal as she entered the world face up (the little rascal). I have never been more tired or happy in my life. I had my darling baby girl in my arms and my proud husband by my side and I was so in love. I still look at her every day and can't believe it. She is just the

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Ed

2012 was a year of sadness and joy. On the last day of 2011, I traveled to Angola, NY, to attend Nancy's (my sister) funeral. The family celebrated her life on New Year's Eve in a motel dining room because all the local restaurants were fully booked. Nancy's husband, Fred, was handling it well. Fred had cared for Nancy for many years as her health slowly deteriorated. He was planning on traveling - visiting their "kids" and other relatives including us. It was not to be. Two weeks later Fred slipped on the ice while walking his dogs, fell, and hit his head. Although he lingered for a while in a coma, he passed away the first week in February, and I again found myself traveling north for the funeral. It

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Matt & Valérie...

allenge--turns out Home Depot doesn't sell materials and designs popular 100 years ago, who knew--so I had to get a little creative. We're currently doing the last touches on the plans for the next phase: a complete electrical rewire, enclosing a small 2nd floor balcony to make an office, adding front and rear driveways, and a complete exterior cleanup and paint job.

We also managed to make quite a few trips this year. Amélie's first plane flight was in May. Valérie took her to the closest Belgian consulate, Atlanta, to finalize Amélie's dual citizenship.

Valérie is a dual citizen (by way of her mother); and although I'm sure Amélie will be a proud American, she'll also have the option, if she wants, to live and work in the EU some day.

Later in May we traveled to San Francisco for a week. I had a work trip, and Valérie and Amélie joined me. We had a great time introducing Amélie to all of our friends there and lucked out with an uncharacteristically warm and beautiful week.

We cut our time short to add a stop in OH to visit Valérie's ailing grandmother. There, Amélie met most of the Morgan side of her family, including her great-grandmother, Cleo Jane. Sadly, Cleo passed away in August, but we're grateful we had the opportunity to say goodbye.

In summer, we also took trips to Hilton Head, SC, for a week at the beach with Valérie's father and his wife, Ron and Anne Morgan, and Valérie's sisters and their children.

Valérie's mother Cathy and sisters also visited us here in Florida for a week in August. Later in August we took a quick trip up to Gainesville to meet Betsy, our new niece and Amélie's first Goff cousin.



In October we visited Valérie's hometown, Winston-Salem, NC, spent a weekend in Charlottesville, VA, for the wedding of one of Valérie's friends from NC and went back to OH for Cleo's memorial service. We finished our year with one last trip, to the Dominican Republic, to visit

Valérie's sister and family-- Amélie's first international trip.

Upon our return, we were lucky enough to have the schedules work to have a great afternoon with Jeff and Kelly Roth, old friends from Kwaj, their kids, and Kelly's mom, Susan.

After all that traveling, it was relief to be back home in Bradenton in time to ring in the New Year.

Happy 2013!

Ed...

is ironic that after all those years of caring for Nancy, he joined her so soon.

In April Barbara and I celebrated our 40th Anniversary by doing absolutely nothing special. We had planned on going out for a fancy dinner, but because of the influx of winter vacationers we were not able to get a reservation. We decided to celebrate at home...

In August, Betsy, grandchild number two, was born to Sarah and Brian. She is a cute and active little girl who is very "talkative". Grandchild number one, Amélie, celebrated her first birthday in November. She is now a toddler and keeps her parents, Matt and Valérie, busy as she explores her little world. We are enjoying being grandparents, watching these two little girls grow and develop their personalities, and we even get to babysit once in a while.

We purchased two "investment houses" this year. One here in Bradenton is about five minutes from home. Barbara is using two of the bedrooms for her craft activities.

This has freed up space at home although our garage is still stacked with treasures from our 37 years of overseas living. I have been spending a lot of time maintaining that house and doing renovations. The other house is in Gainesville, where Betsy lives with her parents. We have done a lot of work on that house, too, and it has come in handy as a place to stay when we visit there.

The whole family was here for Thanksgiving and we all gathered at Barbara's parents' house to give thanks and to enjoy visiting. Harold and Wilma are both in their 90's and still enjoy living in their own home. Since they live about 45 minutes away, we have hired a lady to look in on them regularly, help them with their medications, and drive them wherever they want to go. We are especially thankful that they are doing so well and that they have been able to enjoy their great-grandchildren.

We continue to manage and maintain our property on Anna Maria Island which keeps me quite busy. Although we had a few close calls with hurricanes this year, we didn't have any damage. Water did top the seawall, but it didn't get in the house.

I have also done a few projects around home and helped Matt build a deck on their house. And, I have also been busy with the Bicycle/Pedestrian/Trails Advisory Committee promoting four new trails I have proposed for Manatee County.

Barbara had her right knee replaced in August so I became cook, cleaner, clothes washer, dish washer; you name it, for a while. She is doing very well now and has been walking around the neighborhood every day for more than two months.

A dog tripped me while I was running a few days before New Year's. I took quite a tumble with road rash on my face, shoulder, hand, and knee, but it I kept going and I'm almost healed now. My running streak is still intact. I am now five months in to year 33 and I'm training for the Gasparilla 15K (9.3 miles) in Tampa which will be on February 23rd. Anyone interested in joining me?

Sarah & Brian...

sweetest most innocent thing I've ever seen in my life. It's like there is a light that is shining out from her eyes. She is amazing.

The Repurpose Project is the other baby I made this year. It is a not-for-profit creative reuse center.

Our goal is to divert useful resources from the landfill, redirect these items to the public for art and education, inspire creativity, and help us all rethink what we throw away. It has been doing great. I missed my work with Trash to Treasure, the creative reuse center in South Florida, so when the opportunity to open a center in downtown Gainesville came



knocking I couldn't pass it up. Gainesville is a wonderful town and loves what we are doing, which makes it very rewarding. We have gotten a lot of really great local press. If you are interested in The Project, you can find us on facebook or look at our website: www.repurposeproject.org

We continue to love being on our land and living a simple life. Every day we make our homestead more and more comfortable. We now have a full-sized fridge, an indoor sink, and a stove in our new kitchen structure. We built the 12'x20' Kitchen/Living Room almost entirely out of salvaged materials, most of it during my third trimester! I didn't let that big belly get in the way of hauling those heavy 2x12's. I thought all that physical activity would help me have an easy labor, ha! We were very thankful to have so much help from our friends and family.

So this year has been an amaz-

ing one for me. I feel very very fortunate. I have a happy healthy baby Betsy that makes me melt into a puddle every time I look at her or hear her. I have rewarding work at The Repurpose Project. I live on a beautiful and peaceful piece of property. ...and I have the best family and friends imaginable. I'm a lucky girl. Happy New Year!! I wish you all the best!

Barbara...

babies ever born!

Amélie, who began life looking like mini-Matt, now looks like both her parents with her maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather's bright, blue eyes. I began babysitting as soon as my new knee would permit, so we're about even on who can toddle faster. Amélie is gaining on me, so I've stepped up my PT. I've offered to babysit as often as possible to give her parents a date night. It's my delight, but it also means they don't have to "sell their first-born child" to afford a babysitter on holidays. When I was babysitting, I didn't even make minimum wage and

now sitters make more than a Walmart "sales associate"—\$8.81. What's up with that? Appropos of nothing, did you know CEO's, as of April 2012, make 380 times their average worker's pay—a shocking increase when compared to thirty years ago or with CEO's in other developed nations.

Despite a grueling ninety-hour, natural birth, Sarah and Brian were smiling weakly, while Betsy looked like she was ready to do stand-up. Betsy is the baby with 1000 faces. She's got to have been thinking from the start, as her swiftly changing facial expressions "talk" to anyone around her. We're not exactly sure what she's saying, but it's got to be good.

My art and crafting supplies overran our guest room. While researching an addition, we discovered a cheaper alternative—buying a charming house four minutes away. Before you suggest to the kids that we be committed, listen to our rationale—or is that rationalization? Two

rooms and much of the kitchen became my art studio. The garage is now home to our antique VW camper and Ed's new workshop. Ed is rennovating the master bedroom, bath, and private porch outside the sliding glass doors as a guest house. The great room has a wood-burning fireplace and French doors leading to a screened-in porch. The large back yard is home to our boat trailer. (We have to haul the boat out of Bay Haven, our Anna Maria Island house, for annual servicing and other repairs.) Our first booking is in March, so Ed will be working nonstop to get the floor down in the MBR and the new vanity and lights in the MBR—along with the plantation shutters and the blinds up, while I get the studio in order. Be sure to book early, as we hope there's a rush of friends and family coming to visit.

Fearing Ed might get bored as his 12-hour-day rennovations of rentals slowed (four on AML, plus our house, and the studio), in April I bought a house in Gainesville, ten minutes away from Sarah and Brian Turk! There is reason in my madness. And I really wasn't worried that I needed to keep Ed off the street and out of trouble. Since my cartilage is melting away faster than my fat, I was facing two knee and one left shoulder replacement to go along with my right shoulder's titanium masterpiece. I couldn't picture myself staying in a motel away from the action or crawling into a tent on the most beautiful ten-acres in Gainesville, so I once again went house-hunting with Ed, a willing participant.

After a year of searching, everything came together in time for us to be there with Brian's parents, Dorothy and Richard, to welcome Betsy's arrival. Brian and Sarah loaned us their furniture from storage until they get their home built. We have three bedrooms furnished and ready for guests. Brian's parents, generously offered to do one bedroom. With that, the one we did, and S&B's bedroom, living, dining, kitchen, and family room furniture, we were all set. If you want to visit us there, book ahead. We're a three minute walk away from the beautiful 16-mile-biking/walking/horseback riding trail from Gainesville's Bowlware Springs Park, through the Payne's Prairie Preserve State Park,

and other local and state conservation lands to the town of Hawthorne. Oddly, our housing area in Bradenton is named Hawthorn Park.

On December 14th (the third birthday on the 14th), Valérie, Matt, Sarah and Ed threw me my first birthday party since age ten! Ed proved to be an adroit distractor and fibber, so although I'd had some suspicions, I was flabbergasted to enter Matt and Valerie's fabulous house to find Sarah on the stairs and the living room full of friends. I certainly didn't expect Sarah and Brian to make the three-hour drive twice in twenty hours to attend. The crowd was a super mix of overseas and writing friends and family, some of whom we'd known in Japan in 1970.

After a year of writing and a year of editing, I'm taking a break from the five books written with my writing partner and going back to rewriting my memoir as a narrative and completing my middle school mystery. I have five agents, who have asked for copies, so now I need to get finished products. I have no illusions about getting published, but I need to get them done!

Life is good. I feel grateful every day with the quality of our relationships, creative work, and the beauty around us. May you all be likewise blessed.

