

# The Goff Gazette

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Front: Grandma and Grandpa Gardner, Back left: Sarah, Brian and Betsy, Back center: Barbara and Ed, Back right: Matt, Valérie and Amélie.

## Sarah & Brian Repurpose

This year has been one to watch my babies grow. Betsy is 16 months old now. She is amazing. I'll try not to be an obnoxiously proud mama....but for such a tiny little thing she sure has a presence! Everyone in town seems to know and love her. She is just a bursting ball of sunshine and positive energy and everything that is wonderful. I have enjoyed watching her explore and learn and love this planet and life. She is tough and joyful and funny and beautiful and I feel so lucky to be in her life. I guess you can tell I've completely fallen in love! ...and I've fallen in love with Brian all over again too. He is an amazing papa. We share equally in child rearing. We both have "part-time" jobs. I watch Betsy in the mornings while Brian tutors, and in the afternoon he takes over while I'm at  
*(Continued on p 2., Sarah ...)*

## Ed Becomes Activist

I guess I've been an activist all my life, but it didn't really come to the surface until 2013. It started with the Sandy Hook massacre and continued through the unbelievable Senate vote that defeated the comprehensive background check for gun purchase. I will not pontificate about that any further here except to say that this one isn't over yet, and I'll be there until the end.

I got much more involved in a local effort to prevent a land developer from destroying a two-and-a-half mile long mangrove forest, the adjacent shoreline and shallows along Sarasota Bay here in SW Manatee County. This one isn't over yet either, but we seem to be winning. Of the two proposals made by the developer, one was outright defeated at a marathon Board of  
*(Continued on p.2, Ed ...)*

## Barbara's Rollicking Year

If you want to read about trips to rival our excursion through the jungles, fording rivers, and climbing into a village of headhunters, you'd better reread *The Goff Gazette* of nearly forty years ago. This year I managed to drive Mom to her doc-  
*(Continued on p. 3, Barbara...)*

## Matt & Valérie

The biggest and most exciting event of the year was a trip to Europe in June. Since I'm a full-time telecommuter, I was able to shift my hours and make it a working holiday—have laptop and Skype, will travel! Valérie, Amélie, and I were joined by Valérie's mother, Cathy Morgan, and our ten-year-old niece, Sydney Winter. We spent a month there, mainly visiting family. I was a  
*(Continued on p. 4, Matt...)*

## Sarah continued ...

The Repurpose Project. It is a great setup.

The Repurpose Project, my other baby, has been growing nicely too! We've been open for two years and have had an amazingly positive response from the community. For those who don't know, The Repurpose Project is a non-profit community-based effort to divert useful resources from the landfill, re-direct these items to the public for art and education, inspire creativity, and help us all rethink what we throw away. Specifically, we try to salvage items and material that have value, but aren't accepted by traditional thrift stores. This year we have started deconstructing houses so we now sell salvaged building materials that would have ended up in a dumpster if we hadn't intervened. We have been growing quickly and are about to move into a space four times the size of our current 3000 sq ft building. I find it very rewarding! We are providing Gainesville with an alternative to the mainstream retail big box stores like Lowes, Office Depot, Michaels, Walmart, etc. I feel passionate about promoting buying used. When you buy something used, you eliminate all that goes into producing a new product. The raw materials don't have to be harvested or mined from the planet. The water needed for manufacturing isn't used. The energy needed to harvest/mine, produce, and ship the product isn't used. The packaging is eliminated. It makes a lot of sense to buy used whenever possible! I've taken it to perhaps even a spiritual level in my own mind. I feel like life and this planet and all these resources are such a gift and the best way to show appreciation and gratitude is to use what we already have in our communities before taking more. I feel so lucky that my family is so supportive of me and believes in what I am

doing. If you want to keep up with you can check out the website [www.repurposeproject.org](http://www.repurposeproject.org), or follow us on facebook.

The year has been amazing, but what is love and life without loss to make you remember how precious it all is? Bunny, one of our greyhounds, passed away last month. It caught me off guard. I guess it shouldn't have. She was ten years old and never was the picture of health, but it happened fast. One minute she was there and then she was gone. It was a difficult reminder of how fragile life is and how important it is to appreciate everyone you love and every moment you have. She will be missed. Thankfully we still have our beloved Ojus, our other greyhound.

Happy Holidays everyone!

## Ed continued ...

County Commissioners' meeting which ended at 2:00 AM. The second issue was passed and sent up to the State where it was approved with minor changes. It was to go up for its final vote on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. but the developer mysteriously withdrew it from consideration.

To say that I have been politically active is an understatement and it appears that I'll be very busy through the November elections and beyond. I find it extremely disappointing that we cannot trust our elected officials to represent the wishes of the people who elected them and not cater to the whims of their party or those who financed their campaigns.

Barbara's parents are in their 90's and both have had serious medical issues in the past year. Both have spent time in the hospital and both have gone through rehab. Barbara's father remains in a very nice skilled nursing facility and her mother is now living closer to us in a very nice assisted care facility. We visit them as often as we can. I have taken over

their finances which is a formidable task. They have both been very loving and giving during our forty-two year marriage so we feel honored to assist them now.

It has been a joy to watch Amélie, Matt and Valérie's daughter, go from walking to running. She turned two in November and is starting to talk in both English and French. In March they will welcome a new baby, our first grandson. Matt, Amélie, and I participated in the Gulf Coast Cycle Fest in November. Amélie was the youngest participant riding behind her dad in a child seat. We moved our Thanksgiving supper to their house this year because our house isn't exactly childproofed. I imagine we'll be doing that for a few years! We were also honored a number of times to babysit. Amélie is very good about going to bed. See their article for more details about their active year.

Betsy, Sarah and Brian's little girl, turned one in August. She is a joyful happy child. Even though they live in Gainesville, about 175 miles from here, we manage to see them every two or three months and talk on the phone frequently. See their article for more information about their busy year.

Barbara's health has improved immensely this year. It has taken her over two years to recover from "Cushings Syndrome" which was brought on when a doctor repeatedly overdosed her with massive and unnecessary injections of corticosteroids. We probably should have sued him. Anyway, she is doing much better and almost back to her old peppy self. I'll let her fill you in on the rest of her busy year.

In addition to doing most of the maintenance on our house, I also maintain and manage our rental property. I've come to the realization that at age seventy I'll probably have to farm out some of that work

*(Continued on next page.)*

eventually. In the meantime I have enjoyed learning new skills such as A/C repair and electric service upgrades like main-circuit-breaker-box replacement.

I've made time to work on our 1970 VW Camper Van. This year I replaced the generator, rebuilt the carburetor and fuel pump as well as did normal maintenance. I have plans to adjust the valves, and replace the sending unit in the gas tank this year. I may have to take the engine out to do that. I also hope to get it totally repainted. In addition I've been doing the routine maintenance on our Volvos and replaced the alternator in the V70. I find this kind of work fun as well as financially rewarding.

We did get out in the boat a number of times but, in my judgment, not enough. This was partially due to a broken depth finder which is essential in unfamiliar waters. I am in the process of installing a new Garman Chart Plotter. I just need a few more hours to finish the job which is difficult while the boat is on the lift overhanging the water.

Our two cats, Cutie and Sweet Pea, are becoming lap cats as we had hoped. We enjoy their antics and companionship immensely.

I've spent a significant amount of time attending meetings and working with the MPO Bicycle/Pedestrian/Trails Advisory Committee. I proposed four new bicycle trails totaling over fifty miles here in Manatee County which were recently approved and placed in the master plan. I also developed a bicycle lane planning chart which considers road conditions (speed limits, types of traffic, # of lanes, etc.) to determine optimum lane width including buffer zones. I sent it to our FDOT district director who sent it up to the State level, and I have been told that some version of that plan will appear in the new State standards which are ex-

pected to be approved this year.

My running streak continues uninterrupted. I am now almost half way through year 34 and have no plans to stop. I presently have the 39th longest running streak as listed on the National Registry. I have done two 5-mile races recently and a 5 K and I'm training for a 15 K (9.3 miles) race in Tampa on Feb. 22. I highly recommend running as both an exercise and sport. It isn't always easy but the benefits are well worth the effort. If you can't run, give walking a try.

I hope this update finds everyone well and happy. If not, please let us know if there is anything we can do. Cheers!!!!

## Barbara...

tors without getting in an accident. If you haven't lived in Florida, you don't realize these "creative" drivers are far more exciting than a tribe of savages. Have you ever been behind a snowbird, with a license plate from Anywhere USA or Canada, who makes a left turn across three lanes twenty feet in front of a green light? Or how about the old lady, who screeches to a dead standstill, in a road with a 55 MPH speed limit because she plans to turn right? Of course, I appreciate the drivers who stay safely in the left lane on Interstate 75, ignoring the signs that say **Slow Drivers Stay Right**. Who doesn't admire free thinkers who "do their own thing". This is America, Land of the Free to Do Whatever I Want When I Want.

If you come to visit, I'll be thrilled to tell you about all my travels this year: to my internist, endocrinologist, rheumatologist, dermatologist, ophthalmologist, podiatrist, cardiologist, gastro-enterologist, voice therapist, physical therapist, dentist, ENTist, and dental surgeonologist. Who says I don't have a busy social life? Oh, yeah, I forgot the specialist

for sleep apnea. I wonder if he's a sleepologist or an apneaologist or maybe a somnambulist...oops...I think that's something else. Remember, I'm off-duty now for this English teacher stuff.

If *my* geriatric journeys don't fascinate you, I can tell you about visiting Dad in Hawthorne Village Skilled Nursing Facility. Oh, he's fine. He's only there because he can't make transfers from his bed to his wheelchair, so assisted living facilities have rejected him. He fell in January and broke his back. Two days after surgery he was transported to rehab, where the non-English-speaking amazon aide, jerked his legs because he wasn't getting out of bed fast enough. I reported it, as did his roommate. The administrators couldn't figure out who the lady was, even when she did it again. Complaining, very nicely I can assure you, must have red-flagged us because then he got over-medicated so he couldn't speak in sentences and fell—breaking his shoulder, which the surgeon couldn't operate on because of his age and recent back surgery—something about too much anesthesia.

Then he got kicked off Medicare for "not trying". Did you know that could happen? If you're not improving, you're on your own to the tune of \$10,000 a month. This sounds like a Saturday Night Live skit, except...it's true. When Ed and I were told Dad was kicked off and out, we went looking for a 24/7 facility. Our mouths dropped open with awe when we saw Hawthorne. It looked like a Mediterranean resort—brand new, architecturally interesting, and well furnished. I asked a distinguished-looking man in a wheelchair in the dining area if he liked it there. "It's like living on a cruise ship," he said. I smiled back into his handsome face, assured we had found the perfect place for Dad until he

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added, "The cruise ship Lusitania."

I did a quick double take and realized, from his sly grin, he was joking and knew the Lusitania had sunk. At least Dad would have an intelligent man around—good for some humor and comradery. I was disappointed not to see him when Dad moved in. I feared the worst, but asked and was told that Billy was their "success" story. He had gone home...not so for Dad or the other residents. My heart is broken to see him like this and separated from Mom. The good news is that Dad is settled in and happy because "everybody knows my name." Maybe he's counting his blessings that he isn't like the other residents—hooked up to tubes from every body part, drooling, and spitting up food when they're spoon-fed. Dad is helping the other residents just as he took care of everyone when he was younger. Mom and I always feel depressed leaving him there, but she has retained her sense of humor. "Aren't babies pushing food out of their mouths with their tongues, so much cuter than old people doing the same thing?" she observed one day.

Mom fell and broke her other hip. She joined Dad at Hawthorne for two months. She tried independent living at home, but dropped to 86 pounds despite Meals on Wheels and help. Now we've moved her and her own furniture and things to a place twenty-minutes from us and five minutes away from Matt's. Summerfield is homey and lovely. Her bright, large room looks out on a rose garden, statue of St. Francis, a fountain plumed with shooting water, and many birds. She phones Dad at least twice a day and we visit him often. She's reading nonstop and remains a wise, witty woman. She loves the new wardrobe I found for her and dresses up for her three meals a day with the same tablemates. She tears up the corridors on her spiffy red rollator like

they're her Indy 500 track. She remains philosophical about her life, "Old age ain't no place for sissies," she quotes—from Bette Davis, I think.

As all Christmas newsletters will tell you, our offspring's babies are the most beautiful and brilliant children in the world. We adore every precious minute with them and are most fortunate they live in Florida. We once fondly called Matt the MDU for mobile destructive unit. His daughter, Amélie, at the same age is what her pre-school called "exceptionally curious" and "Is she this active at home?" I remember Ed's sainted mother smiling as she said to his brother, John, about his busy son, John Michael, "John, you have no idea how much you deserve this child."

Not to mislead you, Amélie and Betsy are total sweethearts and joys to be with. Amélie is busy taking care of her anatomically correct boy baby doll to get ready for a little brother in March. Betsy "helps" her mother with everything. One day recently Sarah called me and asked if I minded if she cleaned while we talked because Betsy was sleeping, and she had a tough time getting work finished when Betsy was "helping."

I look forward to a healthier year and relieving Ed of the many duties he took over for me, while I was recuperating. The man has so many gold-stars in heaven, it looks like an asteroid shower over our house. Ed remains my greatest blessing. He's an amazing husband, father, grandfather, son-in-law, community organizer, rabble-rouser, and visionary. The world is a better place because he's in it.

I'm cooking again and decluttering so we won't look like an upcoming episode of *The Hoarders*. Unfortunately, I'm not kidding. My closet-cleaning has left us with so many treasures from our travels

around the globe, that it's embarrassing, but, as always, I have high hopes that by this time next year the house will look like Architectural Digest, and I'll be as thin as a runway model and as fit as that lady trainer on *The Biggest Loser*, which I don't watch because it's so depressing. I'll have written the great American novel and...

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## Matt...

little worried about fifteen hours of traveling with a then one-and-a-half year old, but Amélie did great and we appreciated the extra help.

We started in Gavere, Belgium (near Brussels) and stayed with Cathy's old family friends Anna and Raf Schreyen in their beautiful home built in the early 1800s. After a Eurail strike (to complete the experience, of course) was scheduled on the day our our TGV train ride, we managed to reschedule to leave for Nîmes, France (near the southern coast) one day earlier.

In Nîmes, we stayed with Cathy's sister, Isabelle Goreux (who spoke at Valérie's and my wedding) very near the city center. While I worked most days, the girls showed Amélie the sites. Our last stop was a drive to Bize, in the French Pyrénées, to stay with another of Cathy's sisters, Genevieve Portes, and her husband Michel. Amélie loved the hikes and seeing all the goats and horses. Valérie and I were even able to sneak off for a weekend to go to a friend's wedding in Sevilla, Spain—our first overnight trip without Amélie!

Back in Bradenton, we're still working on renovating our house. My major project was to build a fence enclosing the back yard (over 300 feet in total over many long days). We also had driveways and a front paver walkway installed. I'm in the middle of a complete rewire to get rid of all

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of the old knob-and-tube, and Valérie has been working hard patching and painting a bedroom for Amélie. We're expecting a baby boy in mid-March, so we're working to move Amélie out of the nursery and into her new room well before then. My dad has helped out a lot on bigger projects, and my mom has babysat several times when we needed a break from it all.

Amélie celebrated her second birthday in November, and she's been a lot of fun (and a lot of work). The teacher at her "school" (two mornings a week) asked us: "Does she ever slow down?" No, no she does not.

Happy 2014!

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