

The Goff Gazette

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Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein gutes neues Jahr!

That's German for "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year". From our house to yours, we send the warmest of greetings and the wish that the year 2000 be the best ever for you and all those you hold dear. As we enter a new century, 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's Year

One of Sarah's and my favorite Kwaj. rituals was making a wish and shaking out my Chinese fortune sticks which predicted the outcome of our wish and dispensed a little Chinese wisdom. Of course, we didn't believe these predictions any more than people take stock in Chinese fortune cookie advice; but it was always fun. Last summer Sarah perched on our bed, took up the wooden cylinder, removed the lid, secretly made her wish, and began to shake the sticks. When she finished her fortune, she handed me the box to make mine. Suddenly, I realized that I had only touched the box to put it on my nightstand or dust it; and, furthermore, I couldn't think of a thing to wish for. I was in the enviable state of having had all my wishes of recent years come true. I was living the dream. Eventually, of course, I thought of a health wish; but I couldn't stop marveling over my wish-less state of mind. There were things I would like to do and things I'd like to have; but they didn't require magic...just a little time or money. They were all possible.

I found myself thinking over the year since the last *Goff Gazette* and decided that I had very little to write as the things that made my year so wonderful are simple and not newsworthy. I feel absolutely blessed with family and friends. I love experiencing four seasons again. Last year I described our beautiful backyard as viewed through our kitchen; the large window and floor-to-ceiling back door make up the wall looking out onto the garden and orchard. When I last wrote, I had watched the inches of snow pile up on the picnic table and cling to the stark black branches of the trees. Once May arrived, we were treated to daffodils and narcissi. Bunches of purple violets appeared followed by red tulips. Before each died down, new sprouts sprung up and bloomed.
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Ed, Matt, Barbara, and Sarah in front of their house. You know the old saying; "A man's home is his...."

Sarah's Year

I traveled by myself through Europe and it was incredible. I had no stress of schoolwork and no worries about what other people wanted. I went where I wanted, ate when I wanted, met so many fascinating people, and saw so many great places. I've never felt so independent in my life and I loved it. I went whitewater rafting in Interlaken, saw David in Rome, drank wine while overlooking Florence, and lounged on the cliffs of Cinque Terra, Italy, while eating gelatto. I drank liter beers at the Hoffbrau in Munich, saw great museums in Vienna, and got an excellent massage in Budapest. Those thermal baths and the excellent people
(Continued on p. 3, Sarah...)

Matt's Year

OK, gird yourselves for some boring reading, friends. I guess I'd always taken it for granted that life is usually more sedate after college, but I never really expected it to happen to me. But, as I sat down to pen (type?) my article this year, I can't think of a single exciting bullet point!

I'm still chugging away at my same job at IBM, which I had last year. I'm still enjoying it, but it is beginning to get a little routine. I've started to examine my career and life goals recently, and I think it may be time for a change. With my parents in Germany, I've had the opportunity to do some more international traveling, and it has reminded me how much I loved living abroad. I also find that, as stimulating as my job is, I quickly grow bored if I am not intellectually challenged on a daily basis. So a change is in order. What that may be is unresolved... stay tuned.

My one exciting jaunt of the year was to Germany in the summertime. I flew from Raleigh to Frankfurt and spent a few
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Ed's 1999

Looking back over the past year, I would have to characterize it as one of change. In September of '98, we moved to Germany and spent the next few months doing all those not-fun things associated with a major move and job change. By New Year's Eve, we had settled (sort of) into our house and celebrated our first Christmas in Germany in spite of the piles of unopened boxes that still 'decorated' every room. Matt and Sarah were here; and we found ourselves, all four of us, over at some friends' house celebrating a traditional German New Year's Eve which is more like our 4th of July than anything else.

January saw the kids returning to the States and colder weather here in Metterich. It seemed like a fun challenge to adjust to the change in climate after having lived in the tropics for twenty-five years. February and March were spent "settling in" and taking local trips.

Our spring break came in April and
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Matt...

days with my parents and sister, visiting and recovering from the trip. After the arrival of one of my sister's friends, the three of us (me, my sister, and her friend) began a hostelling trip with stops in Trier and Koln, Germany; Geneva, Switzerland; Barcelona, Spain; and Bordeaux, France. We had a wonderful trip and particularly enjoyed meeting all of the international kids that were on similar journeys of their own.

We had several great adventures on that trip. The first was in Geneva, where we visited an artist colony known as Artemis. There we met a group of young Albanian Kosovars. Of course, at the time the US was laying siege to Kosovo. After quickly reviewing (and nervously trying to remember which was which) that the Albanians were the people we were trying to help, we became friends and talked about life in Artemis.

Our next adventure was on the train to Barcelona, on which we did not have reservations. In Europe, you can board the train with a pass, but if all of the seats are reserved you must ride wherever you can. It was there, smooshed in the little room between cars, that we met and spent eight hours visiting with a group of three Swiss kids our age. We had a great time talking and drinking wine (we need more of this in America—the wine drinking I mean).

Our arrival in Barcelona was a bit on the late side and we rushed about trying to find a place to stay for the night. We took the subway to La Rambla, the main avenue of the city. Unfortunately, the city was jammed with tourists and we walked from hostel to hostel, and then from hotel to hotel, with no luck. We finally jumped back on the subway and randomly took it to the edge of town, hoping to find a room. We stumbled upon the HI Hostel, but they were full for the night. By this time, it was near midnight and we were out of options. So, the sly travelers we were, we snuck around to the back of the hostel into a parklike area that was part of the grounds of the hostel, which was all surrounded by a high wall. Presuming that this would be the safest place we could find, we found a flat spot under the bushes and spent a beautiful night under the stars. As beautiful as it was, we were very glad to find space in that very same hostel the next night (and even more glad for the resultant showers).

Our next stop was Bordeaux, to which we traveled through the Pyrnees to

reach. Despite our fears, we found a cheap hotel for the next few nights and enjoyed our last few days on the road. I had the chance to take a chateau tour, and was able to sample some of the finer wines of the region. If I'd only had some spare francs to buy some for later!

After this stop, I left my sister and her friend to continue their trip. I had to head back to Metterich (via Paris) to catch my flight back to the States. I had a great time, and my only regret was that it ended so soon.

The other drama of the year was the move of my roommates and I into a new house, purchased my one of my roommates. It is amazing how much meaningless garbage one can accumulate after only two years in a house. I guess I can understand how my parents shipped 22,000 pounds (!) to their new German home. For years, I've been fighting the "hoarder" instincts that they (and life in the Philippines and Kwajalein) have instilled in me, but it seems that I am losing that battle, unfortunately for me (and for all of my friends who helped me to move).

The Kwajalein Address Book (<http://pobox.com/~goff/kab.html>) is still going strong, having just passed the 700 address mark. But there are still many of you whom I know from Kwajalein that have not yet added your address. Must I beg? I regularly receive letters of thanks from people who have managed to find long-lost friends. Wouldn't you like to be one of those? Speaking of which, I've lost touch with a lot of my old friends from Kwajalein. If I haven't written you in a while (or ever), please write me! Since you (probably) haven't put your address in the KAB, I don't have it. I can be reached (by anyone, of course) at goff@pobox.com. Or, if you're in the Raleigh, NC area, give me a call at 919-870-8219 (note change from last year!).

Beyond that, it's been my usual activities. I did not make any major outdoor expeditions this year, having used all of my vacation on my trip to Europe. I took a few small trips locally in the Appalachians, but I miss getting out there for a week. Work is hell, huh?

Castle

The castle pictured on the front page is actually a chateau in Vianden, Luxembourg, which is only a thirty minute drive from our house. Vianden is also the former home of the French author, Victor Hugo.

Ed...

so did Barbara's parents who accompanied us up to Sweden where we took delivery of our new Volvo. On our way back, we did a little exploring. We spent the remainder of our vacation touring the local area with them, and then they took off on their own after we started back to school.

In May, spring really came. Flowers, flowers, flowers everywhere. After not experiencing spring for twenty-five years, it was quite an experience. Our garden literally came alive with multi-colored flowers and the fruit trees in our yard blossomed into huge bouquets. It was all quite refreshing. Sarah arrived late in the month and didn't waste any time in starting her "summer adventure". See her article for more details.

School ended in June and we decided to stay in Europe for the summer and travel. I won't say much about that here since that topic will be covered in our "Summer" article. Suffice it to say that we were graced by visits from our good friends Keith and Marlene Perkins, my sister Connie Young and her husband Jim and their kids, Katie and Patrick, and our good friends the Carsons, Bob and Eileen. Matt joined us in July and he and Sarah took off on their own to explore Switzerland, Spain, and France as well as Germany. I'll let them fill you in on their adventures.

By the end of July, everyone had departed so Barbara and I hopped in the Volvo and headed east, to Berlin. After exploring that fascinating city, we again pointed the car east to Poland where we spent a week shopping and sightseeing. See our summer article for all the details.

School started the last week in August and I found myself teaching physics and computer classes again. On September 23rd we celebrated the completion of our first year in Europe; and as the weather turns cooler and the leaves begin to turn color, we are looking forward to another German winter wonderland.

We are planning a hop over to London for the Thanksgiving break and perhaps a return trip for the beginning of year 2000. We also anticipate Matt and Sarah being here for the holidays.

Oh, yes, my running streak. It is still intact as of this writing. I'm doing a little over three miles per day but have not done any long runs (over 5 miles) for a while. If I can keep it going until next August, I will have run every day for twenty years. Keep your fingers crossed.

Barbara...

Since we had planted nothing, every day brought surprises. The tiny, spindly tree which had held an amazing load of snow through the winter suddenly turned out to be three lilac trees intertwined—one purple and two white. I got misty-eyed some days as my long-remembered favorites appeared. I had missed spring for twenty-five years.

Our garden is continuing to bloom with unexpected plants. Our landlords arrive periodically to prune and plant. Last week we got two little bushes which, they say, will remain beautifully green through the winter. They have come to pick cherries and apples; but they always share the bounty with us as well as jam and kuchen made from the fruit. For several weeks this summer, I breakfasted on raspberries and blackberries. I'd stroll out for my look at what had ripened and take each berry when it was perfect. Even now as the leaves are beginning to glow yellow and red, we have a new crop of yellow roses and purple asters.

This year has also brought a new hobby for me. Although we are blessed with the outside maintained by our green-thumbed landlords, I have taken up indoor gardening. Even through the dead of winter, our commissary stocks blooming flowers from Holland's greenhouses. For a pittance, I have kept every room of our house continually blooming since we moved in. It is one of the great joys of being here.

My year has been also filled with blooming students. After years of enjoying high school and working hard to hone my teaching skills at that level, I was shocked when I fell in love with teaching sixth grade. Initially, I thought I'd move to high school when an opening occurred, but I found when it did that I wanted to stay where I was. When my principal wanted me to move to seventh and eighth, I requested being able to stay with sixth. Our compromise was this year's schedule: one sixth grade language/arts reading class, and a pilot reading program (one class each of seventh and eighth grades). I'm enjoying all three classes. My sixth graders are exceptionally bright and motivated. Getting back into reading and learning all the new materials and programs has been interesting and challenging. Already I'm seeing these reluctant and discouraged readers getting excited about class. School just couldn't be more fun and professionally rewarding. I look forward every day to my beautiful drive along a twisty Eifel mountain

road to a school filled with fun-loving, energetic professionals.

The only blight in my blissful life is my foot. Last spring, after appointments canceled because the orthopedic doctor had been deployed to Kosovo, I finally saw a doctor for what was supposed to be my exit appointment for my foot. I expected to begin my walking program the next day; then I would gradually get back into jogging; the pounds would drop off, and I'd return to my physically fit self. Instead, I was told that I had damaged the Lis-Franc joint of my foot, which was causing the pain. The doctor recommended that I stand and walk as little as possible. Right! Anyone making that recommendation never saw a class of sixth graders in action. So this year ends with me still seeking physical fitness and pain relief. How fortunate that everything else in our lives is so good. We feel blessed.

Sarah...

I met in Budapest kept me there for a week. Finally, I got to Prague; and although my time there got cut short, those few days left a lasting impression on me. It's just about the most beautiful city I can imagine.

Then, I headed back to Germany to pick up my brother. After our quick trip to Koln, which was Matt's introduction to youth hosteling, we were back home to meet my friend Ryan in Luxembourg. Soon we were off on another train to Geneva. The train ride to Barcelona was an adventure since we didn't have reserved seats and had to sit on the floor between cars. We met some great kids from Switzerland and ended up having a fun time listening to music and drinking wine. That night in Barcelona was also an adventure...as we spent it sleeping under a bush. Quite a night! The whole trip was incredible...truly a life-changing experience.

After all these adventures in Europe, as if they weren't enough, I headed off to Honduras with my two professors and two other students to start working on one of my senior theses. I'm graduating, I hope I hope, this spring with a double major in Natural Science and Fine Arts. Anyways, this time in Honduras, although very stressful at times, was worthwhile.

I was able to get to know my professors exceedingly well. It was an intense two weeks of collecting specimens for the brain research I'm doing for my senior the-

sis in neurobiology, but we were also able to do a few pleasure dives where I saw some incredible reefs and some incredible animals.

I'm having a great last year at college. I've been doing a bunch of artwork and am taking an oil painting class, which is a lot of fun. I'm very happy with my living situation. I live alone in an old hotel room. It's just one room and a bathroom...but it has a balcony! Exciting! I've also been playing Capoeira like crazy. It's a martial arts/dance type of thing and it's rad. I want to do it for the rest of my life.

Berlin and Poland

As July closed and the summer was vanishing, we decided it was time for a trip. We were shocked it had taken us so long to recover from our crazy year of moving and change. We headed north to Berlin for two days of looking at predictable things like Checkpoint Charlie and where remnants of the wall still stood. Outside the city, while exploring the countryside we happened upon what must have been a former communist resort town on a lake. We saw the dachas of the officials which looked like something from cold war movies. All along the lake, free enterprise was at work converting this section of the former East Germany into a playground for the new capitalists from Berlin. From there we headed further into uncharted territory with no guidebook to really help us along. We left our newly constructed autobahn through Germany (the Germans are pouring billions into the infrastructure of the former East) and crossed into Poland. The main East-West road to Krakow was two-lane. Along it were "rest areas" consisting of a kiosk with snacks and a W.C. for a fee, of course. We diverted into Boleslowiac, the town famous for Silesian "peacock" pottery which is all the rage among the Americans on the bases here. Fortunately, we arrived when there weren't buses of shoppers making the eleven-hour trip just for the hand-painted dishes. We were lucky to find most of what we wanted for everyday dishes. They are cheerful, provincial designs excellent for microwave and regular ovens. We enjoy them now daily.

With our car riding a little lower than before our stop, we headed down the highway to Krakow. The road deteriorated into a bump-thump ride which vibrated us
(Continued on p. 4, Poland...)

Poland...

from single organisms into unconnected millions of cells or so it felt. We've always joked when we hit little stretches of highways like that in the States that we were on the section built by the mayor's brother, but this one had to have been built by the premier's brother because it went on endlessly. We hoped that our new Volvo, which had chewed up the new German autobahn and hated to be held to 130 kilometers per hour as it purred down the smooth road, wouldn't end in pieces in Poland.

Our first night we tried for a hotel in Wroclaw. Apparently we missed the beautiful parts of the city. We drove and drove seeing only slums and a \$100 a night motel hidden behind barbed wire...quite depressing. We decided to head down the road to the countryside. Exhausted, we exited at a highway sign with a bed painted on it and found ourselves on a twisting dirt road past fields of crops, barns with barking dogs, and workers leaning on viciously pronged pitchforks. We wished we were in my old VW instead of the conspicuously shiny, new, blue Volvo stationwagon.

Despite the roadhouse exterior, we found ourselves in a nice "motel" with a clean room with its own bathroom, no less, and a restaurant. Despite our lack of language, we managed to figure out a delicious dinner. I kept waking every time the dogs barked and listened carefully expecting to hear the purr of our Volvo being driven away. Nightmares of being stranded persisted, but by our second night in Poland near Krakow, I had conquered my overactive imagination. We did take precautions and followed the advice of friends to stay only in places where our car was guarded. I didn't get over my dislike of barbed wire; but I relaxed and enjoyed the wonderfully friendly people and the beauty of the country.

We enjoyed gourmet food for the price of sandwiches in Germany. Dining in the simplest restaurant was on snowy white linens with gracious service. Krakow was a city of beautiful architecture and sophisticated people. We were thrilled to see the cathedral where Pope John Paul II had been cardinal and the university where Copernicus had formulated his civilization-altering ideas.

We had also visited nearby Auschwitz and Birkanau, where the death-camp scenes of *Shindler's List* were filmed. I can add nothing to what others have depicted better, but viewing the camps in per-

son, we felt, viscerally, the incredible magnitude of the numbers of people and degree of suffering. We hadn't expected the buildings and grounds of Auschwitz to be so beautiful. The contrast of the exterior beauty with the interior horrors was stark: heaps of eyeglasses and mountains of tiny shoes, along with rows of ID pictures showing the faces of the multitudes who had passed through lasting only a few months there. We cannot reconcile those events of history with the warmth of the German people we know.

We had braced ourselves for this visit. Glad we had gone, we were ready to move on to the largest, oldest, operating saltmine in Europe. This tourist operation was the slickest we have seen outside of Disneyland, but well worth the trip. They took our VISA card, assigned us to the English-language tour, and charmed us through centuries of levels of history and salt.

From Krakow, we drove south to the ski resort of Zakopone which is continuing to bid for the Winter Olympics. We found ourselves involved in interesting conversations with a touring, Irish computer teacher and the landlord of a restaurant where we ate who had invited us to join him. We learned of the difficulties of switching to a free-market economy and about the dangers of traveling alone in former Eastern Bloc nations.

Another day in yet another ski resort found us talking with two teachers from near Wroclaw. We spent several hours in fascinating conversation while seated on a terrace over a rushing mountain stream. People thirty and under are adjusting well to the changes from communism to capitalism and look forward to an exciting future, but their parents and grandparents are suffering horribly. They have been through a hard decade and may not live to see better times. We can see that the next five to ten years will be spent on improving the infrastructure. Poland is simply bursting with hard-working people eager for their future. They have been working so hard for so long that it must get discouraging, but we believe they are closer than they realize to a much better life.

We loved Poland so much that we hope to go back this summer. We want to spend time in the Czech Republic, particularly Prague, with a side trip back to southern Poland. The Wroclaw teachers told us that Prague was the most beautiful city they had visited.

One interesting sidelight...we found the second ski resort town loaded with Pol-

ish tourists. There was no room to be had at any price. Finally, one lady took pity on us and said her sister had a place that she was sure wasn't full. She called her and told us smilingly that there was room and that she would come for us as it was difficult to find. I dashed out to tell Ed the good news, and he turned the car around to prepare for the arrival of the sister we were to follow. I walked back down to carry on a mostly sign-language conversation with our benefactor. Looking down the road in the distance I could see a figure walking toward us. I had expected the sister to arrive by car, but as she grew closer I realized this was the sister we were waiting for...a nun in full black and white garb! Ed and I controlled our astonishment and shuffled bundles and boxes around to make room for her in our car.

Up the winding mountain roads we roamed until we reached our destination which turned out to be a resort for visiting clergy. They gave us a level of the house to ourselves except for their visits to the chapel on our floor. We had a charming room, beautifully decorated, with our own bathroom across the hall. We listened for the bell calling us to dinner with three visiting nuns from other areas of Poland and a priest who spoke English. We had wonderful broken conversations with the nuns who had been forced to learn Russian, but wistfully told how they wished they had been able to learn English. The priest was full of fascinating stories and views. When we commented that they must be proud of their Polish Pope, the priest told us he had studied with John Paul in Krakow.

We excused ourselves to go sightseeing in the town. We did want to see the town, but Ed was eager to find a beer which was his usual way of winding down from the sometimes harrowing days of driving. He said he felt like a teenager sneaking out for beverage! It was on this excursion, while admiring the river view below, that the young teacher from Wroclaw motioned us down to join them at their table. He was articulate and well-read. We learned much about Poland, past and present, from him. His companion spoke little English, so our lively conversation kept him busy translating back and forth.

Other highlights of our Poland trip included my visit to a resort town which was a favorite of Chopin. There was a Chopin museum and connections to him at practically every turn. Our hotel near there was

the cheapest of our trip—about \$16 for a huge, lovely room and bath. Ed's run there was interesting as the path wove in and out across the border with Slovakia. It was the only place where we paid a Polish price. Even the charming nuns saw us coming! The experiences there, however, were worth our most expensive night in Poland. The nuns charged even more than our fancy, Zakopane cliffside hotel! We considered our stay a donation to a worthy cause.

We hated to leave Poland, but the eclipse was coming so we needed to hurry home. We made another quick trip through Boleslowiak to see if there were any new pieces. We also wanted to visit a nearby glass-blowing place which turned into another trip highlight. We always stop to see glass—Ed's connection to Corning Glass and our love of it. We found the inconspicuous place after initially driving by it. We went to the gate and they rang us in. The girl who opened the sales shop for us proved to be the wife of the son of the owner. When she heard "Corning", she got very excited and dashed out to get her father-in-law and some books. She showed us a coffee table book of famous modern glass pieces which included one of her father-in-law's pieces which was at the Corning Glass Museum. Ed and I actually remembered it. That was part of the reason we knew that interesting pieces were being created in Poland.

The father-in-law arrived and we spoke with him briefly. He was preparing a collection for a show in the Haag. We got a preview of magnificent, museum-quality pieces. The son's work was also startling and interesting. We met him at work and then went back to the museum shop to buy a few things made by their workers which were in our price range. Our only regret is that we didn't buy more. I can't bear to part with any of it, and I wish we'd bought gifts there.

We had taken so long that we had a marathon drive home which was made even longer because we got stuck in a "stahl" on the autobahn. That became a cultural experience, too, as we were in miles of traffic stopped with engines off for an hour. The Germans around us were impressed with Ed's meticulous job of cleaning all the windows of our car. He laughingly cleaned several other cars and struck up conversations with the occupants. I told Ed he was an American goodwill ambassador. I hope his demonstration of middle-class work ethic displaced the typical American stereotype of

us as lazy, spoiled, indulgent, aggressive, gun-toting materialists.

Sweden

Barbara's parents arrived for a spring break trip to Goteborg, Sweden, to the Volvo factory to pick up our new station wagon. We had decided that a safe car would be prudent for our regular excursions onto the autobahn and a station wagon would be great for summer camping. As it turned out, we didn't camp; but it was good for hauling back treasures from Poland!

For the same delivery fee, Volvo would take us to Sweden or bring the car to us. We opted for traveling and invited my parents to come along. We took the train from our local station Bitburg-Erdorf, which is only three kilometers (1 1/2 miles) away. We parked the car for free (another village benefit) and headed north. It was our first train travels since Japan in the early seventies, and we enjoyed it just as we had then. From our port in Kiel, Germany, aboard the Stena Line Ferry, we were on our way to Sweden. Weather was still colder there than we had anticipated, but the new, metallic blue wagon presented dramatically met our expectations.

You must remember that we'd been in Kwajalein for seventeen years and thought a new Huffy, fat-tire bike every couple of years was pretty spiffy. The teachers at my school thought it was funny that I was impressed that my VW Jetta, 1988 vintage, was cool because it had windshield washers and one turn of the key opened all the locks!

You can imagine our delight over a car with the bells and whistles of 1999. We took it on a spin to the seaside resort of Marchand and tooled around the suburbs of Goteborg looking at how people lived. Our hotel was attached to a large mall where we enjoyed shopping and eating.

One of the highlights of our trip back was visiting the ancient town of Gosborg, home of kitchen witches, which hang in the kitchens in Germany to drive the bad spirits away. It must work, as kitchens here are invariably cheery and produce fabulous food. Set in the Hartz Mountains, it is a fascinatingly beautiful walk back in history. We strolled through the square in time to enjoy the glockenspiel, with its knights riding around as it chimed the hours, and around the crooked cobblestone streets. Mom purchased a witch for her kitchen while I added one to my growing collection.

We spent our first night overnight in German accommodation since our arrival and enjoyed the down-covered duvets and brilliantly white linens. The attached restaurant was filled with hunting trophies from the Hartz Mountains mounted on the walls of the rustic dining room. The food was exception and inexpensive. The next morning we were able to walk through tiny gardens each with a little house that we had viewed from the train of the way up. Apparently, there is a common practice of making a garden area available so that city people have their little plot of soil in which to grow things. The charming little houses are not for weekending, but just a place to house the equipment to make the gardens grow beautifully.

We made note to return and stay longer in these mountains that were once divided by the wall between the Germans. We want to go back in the summer to many places we visited including Hamelin, of Pied Piper fame. The piping of the rats out of town is enacted in the summer.

Mom and Dad said the back seat of the car is comfortable so come on over, friends and relatives and check it out!

Amsterdam

One enjoyable side trip this summer was up to Amsterdam with Keith and Marlene Perkins. They had flown from Saudi to Amsterdam where they caught the train to Bitburg arriving the day after our school was out. After touring our favorite close attractions, like the castle at Vianden, Luxembourg, and Bernkastle-Kues, a medieval city on the Moselle River, we drove north to Holland.

We spent a delightful morning at the famous Kroller-Muller Museum viewing its 278 VanGoghs in galleries filled with light and an afternoon at a park containing recreations of old Dutch buildings. The next day we headed to a lovely fishing village north of Amsterdam where we wandered the shoreline and crooked streets.

In Amsterdam, Keith and Marlene, viewed more VanGogh's while we took a canal ride. The next morning we dropped them at Schipol for their flight to California after a stop in London, while we went on to Madurodam, a miniature Dutch city, which Dad and Mom had recommended from their Dutch, tulip-viewing trip to Keukenhof. It was spectacular. We also enjoyed a trip to

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Amsterdam...

Delft, of pottery fame, where we toured two, official Delft factories and purchased a small pitcher. We loved the village square filled with flowers, sunshine, and shops.

While we loved Holland, our feelings about Amsterdam were similar to our last trip. We prefer the countryside and small villages. We continue to be grateful that we live in the beautiful countryside near to the cosmopolitan, urban areas.

Eclipse

On August 11, 1999, the earth experienced the last total, solar eclipse of the millennium. After a beautiful summer of clear, blue skies, the day of the eclipse, like the day before it, was overcast and rainy. Bob and Eileen Carson had come from Kwajalein for the big event. Bob was possibly the only person more excited than Ed; and Ed was determined that we would drive to the best possible place for viewing. After much Internet searching for the spot and the weather, Ed chose a place south of Luxembourg to the west of Metz, France.

Bob and Eileen arrived August 10 with her brother Gene and his wife, Jackie Catlin. We got up early to miserable weather and drove, hopefully looking for breaks in the clouds, to Metz. We started west until we found an eclipse-viewing sign in a field in Jarny, France. That looked auspicious. We stopped in a parking lot across the street but remained in the cars to stay dry. Eileen prayed while I meditated. As the time grew near, we joined the crowds of people in the field, which had mushroomed with tents serving food and selling souvenirs. One tent was temporarily home to the local post office which was selling special postcards and stamps, which they canceled right then and there.

As the time for the eclipse drew near, we watched one bright spot in the dark, cloudy sky. It continued to move in the right direction until miraculously it arrived at the exact, right spot at perfect moment. Who doesn't believe in the power of prayer and meditation? As the heavens opened, the crowd gasped at the sight of the crescent sun. The shadow grew until the entire field of people wearing their funny protective glasses oohed and aahed practically in unison at the corona, Bailey's Beads, and two diamond rings. Bob manned the heavy equipment of his telescope, which he had brought all the way from Kwajalein, while we attempted shots with our camera.

Everyone in that field in Jarny was

so friendly. We were glad we had the added thrill of being in a crowd for the event. Watching the French crowd, with us the only foreigners, was almost as amazing as the eclipse itself. Seeing the darkness fall and recede even on an already cloudy day was dramatic.

After the eclipse, we packed our gear and went to an outdoor concert in Metz of Holtz's *The Planets*. We arrived in time to hear it for ten minutes as we circled in terrible traffic unable to find parking. But the worst was yet to come. As we headed back to Luxembourg, we discovered that all of Belgium, Holland, and even Denmark must have trickled in to see the eclipse. Now en mass, they were driving north. Gene had to stop to get gas at a plaza in Luxembourg, which looked like Woodstock revisited.

Forty-five minutes later, we were finally on the road back to Germany but still in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Once we got near Trier, we were on our home turf where we proceeded on back roads through tiny villages south of our house. Eileen said she was glad it had happened, as it was the most beautiful drive of our trip. We love our own area so much we are tempted never to leave. People from all over Europe take their annual vacations here in this lovely spot that we call home.

We were sad to see our visitors go. Bob had shared his expertise as an astronomer, and Eileen had brought word of many Kwaj. folks to us. We miss the people, but remain so grateful to be here.

England

The place I have most wanted to visit in Europe was the UK, but despite trips in 1965, 1994, and living here for a year, I hadn't fulfilled the dream. In all my years of thinking about it, I never would have guessed that I would go as a chaperone to high school kids, but that's just what we did. We went with an "outdoors", hiking club from BHS.

We left the BHS parking lot right after school on Wednesday via German bus. We spent the night in Calais and caught the 8 AM ferry to Dover. From there we went to Canterbury and visited the cathedral and town before driving on to our London accommodations. In Canterbury we ate our first English meat pies and enjoyed some fish and chips which, amazingly enough, turned out to be our only ones of the trip. The cathedral was amazing. We couldn't believe we could stand on the actual spot where the Archbishop had been murdered so many cen-

turies ago. We want to see the movie, *Becket*, again to refresh our memories of that time in history.

Our first stop after we got settled in London was to the half-price ticket booth in Leicester Square to see if we could get a theatre tickets for that evening for us and our two boys we were chaperoning. We thought they might like something lively so we went to Starlight Express. They could barely stay awake as they had stayed up too late the night before, but we enjoyed the lively staging and good music. Now when I play my favorite Andrew Lloyd Weber CD, I can picture that show too.

We spent the rest of the afternoon taking the boys to the regular sights of London. Before we got back that night to the hotel, we had seen the buildings of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, the new millennium ferris wheel, and most of the other famous downtown sights. For everyone wondering, my ankle surgery has made me stable; but I've been advised to stay off my feet and wear orthotics for the rest of my life. Right! The last doctor said that I couldn't do much more damage so I could just let pain be my guide, which I did. For the first time in four years, I walked and walked until I walked off three pounds in four days.

The next day after our morning excursion with the entire group to the Tower of London, our boys elected to go with the trip organizer back to Picadilly Circus rather than proceed with us to the British Museum to see the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta Stone. They also decided not to join us for another go at the theatre. This time we saw a long-running English ghost story, *The Woman in Black*. In retrospect, we wish we had gone to another musical; but we plan to go back many more times to England. It's an easy long weekend from here if we fly. Lots of the teachers go over just to see plays.

Our guides from the befeater at the Tower of London, who was a fabulous actor, and the guide at the British Museum were wonderful. I want to go on several London walks, like the Dickens' walk and the Jack the Ripper walk, with these talented guides when we go again. There's so much left to do, but we did an amazing amount in our two days there.

The next day we were off again as a group to Windsor Castle where we watched the changing of the guard and toured the grounds and buildings. We picked up lunch at a bakery on the way back to our bus, which

took us back to Dover, and the ferry to Calais. The next morning we drove to Brugge, a Belgium city filled with canals reminiscent of Venice, where we spent several hours looking at the sights, eating muscels at a gourmet restaurant which had been highly recommended to us, and buying a shopping bag of the famous Belgium chocolate, and a tiny parcel of the pricey, hand-made bobbin lace which the city is famous for. I also bought one piece of the machine-made lace, which is beautiful in its own way. We hope to eventually find a tapestry, but we need to do some research before we go looking to buy. We had taken our first trip to Brugge—complete with canal boat trip—with Bill and Sara Ryskamp last year, and we look forward to returning to this picturesque place.

Home at last, we were exhausted from the pace; but happy that the trip had been so successful and filled with great memories.

Addiction

The last few years on Kwajalein were times for saving money. I'd bought enough T-shirts and Waterford to last a lifetime. Arriving in Europe, I experienced such sticker-shock that I spent a whole evening in November 1998 at the Spangdahlem Bazaar without spending a dollar or a Deutschmark! The next day I managed to resist Rosa with her fabulous rugs, but not Svetlana from Latvia with lacquer boxes from Russia. I couldn't resist the appeal of the artwork on these miniatures, which illustrated some of my favorite folk and fairy tales.

By spring, sticker shock was receding and I was developing a taste for things European, but Svetlana failed to show up with the other vendors at the Spring Bazaar. November brought Svetlana again, and we became fast friends as she educated me more on what I was seeing. Of the five vendors at the bazaar selling Russian goods, only Svetlana's proved irresistible. I'm already saving up for her next trip.

For all of you aware of my china addition, it has been almost replaced by lacquer; but I did manage to tuck a bone china mug into my handcarry after my visit to the Windsor Castle's chapel gift shop. Every afternoon when I return from school, I drink my Marks and Spencer tea from its paper-thin, translucence!

Mrs. Goff?

We were reminded that the world is a small place one night as we were shopping at the Bitburg Exchange. I dashed toward a checkout counter with a bundle of sale clothes over my arm when I encountered a young mother with twin girls in tow headed toward the same counter. I told her to go ahead, but she indicated that I should go first. I darted in and was dropping my armload of stuff on the countertop when I heard a startled voice exclaim, "Mrs. Goff?"

I turned to the familiar voice and couldn't quite get my breath as I recognized my former Kwaj. student, Julianne Fisher. I had been her teacher for 10th and 11th grade English, and Expository Writing. She introduced her pilot husband, Adam Quale, and their twin daughters. We talked a little, and I visited in her home later to catch up on her news. She is presently expecting their Christmas baby and is on total bedrest...not easy with the twins, who are precious, darling, well-behaved, adorable girls.

Seeing Julianne was so satisfying for many reasons. I realized that I had missed talking about our home for seventeen years with someone who understands the experience. People here are astounded that we could have "put our lives on hold for so long". They look pityingly at us obviously glad they had spent their lives wandering Europe, eating the fabulous food, and living in relative luxury.

Julianne and Matt were in the same class so I hope we can all get together at some point over Christmas vacation. Julianne was surprised to hear that a former prom dress of hers, which she had sold to Sarah, is presently hanging in our attic here in Metterich.

Summer 2000

We plan to spend about three weeks in the States this summer. We may make our trip early in the summer, in June, or we may join the Goff clan for the reunion cruise in August. We will also spend some time in Florida with family, rental property, and the dentist. Since we don't know how long we'll be in Europe, we want to continue to take advantage of our vacation time here to travel. Sarah will be over in May after she graduates from New College. She will house-sit for us while we're gone. We're hopeful that Matt can make the trip too.

Voltage, TV, and Telephone

When we came to Europe we knew that everything would be 220 volts and we were pleasantly surprised that most of our electronic equipment and some of our appliances were easily switched over from 110 volts. What we didn't realize was how complicated telephones and TV would be.

First telephones. Our phone number is 06565-931015 but only if you call from Germany outside our town. If you are in our town, you drop the numbers in front of the hyphen. If you are outside Germany, you drop the leading zero, dial the international access code for the country you are calling from (011 in the US) and add the country code for Germany, which is 49. So, if you wanted to phone us from the US, you could direct dial 011-49-6565-931015. This is further complicated because the number of digits in the last grouping (931015 in our case) varies from household to household.

Television is another story. American TVs won't work over here except for the American military channels of which there is only one broadcast locally. Renting or purchasing a digital decoder and satellite dish solves that problem. It is a little tricky setting up that system, especially pointing the dish but, once done, you will receive all six AFRTS TV channels and the picture is perfect. A bonus of this is that you can receive a number of other channels from the same satellite but most are in non-English languages. The fix here is to motorize your dish so that you can point it at other satellites of which there are over fifty.

This is only half the picture (pun intended) since there are a number of satellites that transmit analog signals as opposed to digital which requires the decoder. Our house already had a dish pointed at one of these satellites so I went out and purchased a \$42.00 tuner that can pick up 500 channels. Yes, you read that right, 500. We don't get that many because some of them are encrypted; but we get a bunch including CNN, CNBC, EuroSport, and a number of other English language channels. We could get even more if we wanted to motorize that antenna but who cares? We didn't come to Germany to watch TV.

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Millennium

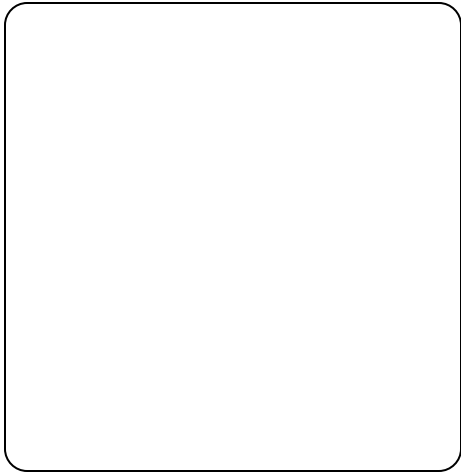
Several years ago at the Midnight Run on Kwajalein, someone asked Ed where he'd like to celebrate the Millennium. He surprised me by saying, "Paris!" That seemed unlikely to me since we were living so far away. Our move to only four hours away from Paris has made his wish a real possibility.

We were so happy that Matt decided to spend his precious vacation time with us again this year and that Sarah would be home from her last year in college. We did a lot of checking on rooms in Paris, but

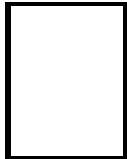
they've been fully booked for years. We think something may open up at the last minute, and we might drive over and stay outside of town; but, in any case, the millennium will be celebrated with our foursome, back together again, in Europe.

I bought our bubbly in Luxembourg earlier this year, and we have the Waterford champagne glasses ready. We send good wishes for a prosperous, happy beginning to all our friends and relatives around the world.

MERRY CHRISTMAS



**The Goffs
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