

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year From the Gills in Germany



Greetings from Germany! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from our house to yours. We hope this letter finds everyone reflecting on a joy-filled 2006 and looking forward to happiness and peace in 2007. It's hard to believe, but we have been in Germany for a year and a half already. We are waiting to hear on the prospects of staying until summer 2009 – more opportunities for family and friends to visit!



Eclipsing all other events of the year was the news that we are expecting in Jan 2007!! We have been busy preparing for the arrival of Baby Gill – baby room, baby preparation classes, baby names... Grandpa Leccese said we need some new blood in the family with the current youngest grandchild turning 19 early next year. And Grandma and Grandpa Gill will be welcoming their 11th grandchild!



In the beginning of the year we took some local tour bus trips and traveled southern Germany. We visited the famous Mosel wine region and sampled many tasty wines. As a matter of fact, we've had more wine since we've been here than in the rest of our 30 something years and are building quite the collection. We also had the opportunity to visit Cologne and the famous gothic cathedral where relics of the three Magi are located.



In March Robert's cousin Candice visited with her boyfriend (now fiancé) Mike. We took them on a whirlwind tour of Bavarian Germany including the walled city of Rothenburg, Munich, Neuschwanstein (the Cinderella castle), and the Black Forest. It was a great visit.



In April we took a trip to Holland to check out the tulips, spring flowers, windmills, and canals of Amsterdam. Although spring was a little late the flowers were still beautiful – just like the tulip catalogs we used to pour over as kids. This was the first trip in our new Ford Freestyle. It's been a great car so far.

Davina had the awesome opportunity of visiting the Holy Land in April. It was an incredible ten day trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and all places in between. The weight of the history of the region was so heavy in every site the tour visited.



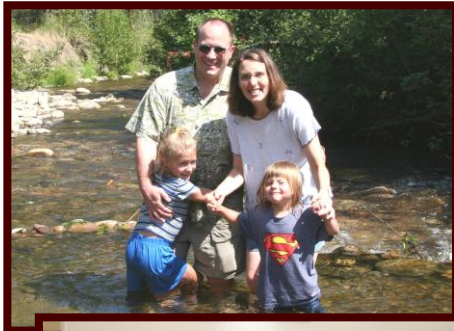
May, June, and July were spent mostly at home with Davina figuring out what agreed with her stomach and what didn't. And Robert figuring out how to make Davina more comfortable – not always an easy task. ☺ In July there was a small scare that put Davina in the hospital for a few days. Thankfully everything was okay with mom and baby.



The yard kept us busy through the summer as well with the bumper crop of cherries, apples, plums, pears, rhubarb, raspberries, gooseberries, & strawberries.

Knowing we wouldn't be able to travel home for the holidays, we planned a trip to the states in August. We had the great pleasure of going to Sitka, Alaska to celebrate the wedding of Davina's nephew.





It was an island wedding – not Hawaiian weather though as Davina had dressed for. We were able to see Davina’s parents, her brother & sisters, and her nephew and nieces. It was a fun trip – including the private whale-watching tour. Thanks, Mike!



From Alaska we swung down to visit Robert’s sister and her family outside of Spokane, Washington. They recently moved into their new home overlooking Lake Roosevelt. It was fun to see the nieces and meet the newest nephew Max.



Our last stop before returning home was Ohio. We were able to visit with the rest of Robert’s family and enjoy a baby shower for Davina to get Baby Gill off on the right foot with lots of baby gear and goodies. While we were gone, the dogs almost had a run in with the local German police. Luckily



Robert’s First Sergeant was able to resolve it – but that’s another story.

Over Labor Day weekend we toured some historic sites in France – the Citadel in Bitche and one of the forts on the Maginot Line. This area of France was part of Germany at one time.

In October we were happy to have visits from Davina’s Aunt Carol and her parents. We also took a quick trip to Salzburg, Austria – the “Sound of Music” city – and a visit to Hitler’s famous Eagle’s Nest. With Davina’s aunt we visited Mespelbrunn Castle and Rothenburg (we like Rothenburg). And Aunt Carol took the apples from the backyard and made homemade applesauce. Yum!



Davina’s dad craved the real German experience during his visit so we went to a local festival and enjoyed some beer at the beer tent. Maybe next year we’ll check out Oktoberfest. Dad helped Robert assemble the furniture for the baby’s room as well. With two engineers on the task there is no doubt it’s sturdy. Also with Davina’s parents we went to the Black Forest for a few days to enjoy the local culture including cuckoo clocks and the highest waterfall in Germany. We look forward to their return at the end of January.



November and December were spent at home continuing to get ready for baby and attending numerous holiday socials, including two at our house, with both friends & Robert’s work.

Of course in the midst of all this travel and visitors Robert was kept busy at work with his squadron. Davina, for her part, accompanied two church choirs on piano. She’s been enjoying having a reason to practice and play regularly.



Please check out www.bunt.com/~twogills for the latest photos, videos, and baby updates.



We wish you a happy and blessed 2007.

Robert & Davina

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