

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE GILLS

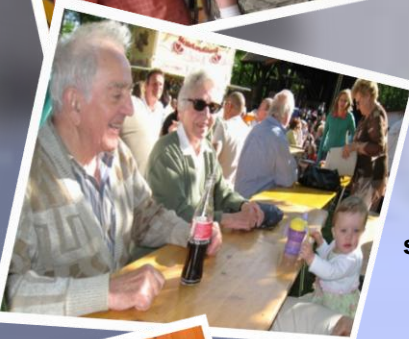
Season's Greetings and Merry Christmas from Germany and Iraq. We wish you all a blessed holiday season as we recap 2008. This year was our 3rd full year in Germany and we enjoyed most every minute of it. We rang in the New Year with Davina's sister Gloria and enjoyed empanadas made from their mom's secret recipe. We dropped off Gloria at the airport a few days later and picked up Davina's parents who came for Corinne's 1st birthday party. Davina's sister Katherine and Robert's parents also came for the big rubber ducky birthday bash. It was a fun time complete with forty people – half of which were under the age of 5! The rubber ducky theme was a hit complete with a rubber ducky cake, duck pond, and ducky door prizes. Well not more than 4 weeks later Corinne fell off the bottom step in the living room and broke her arm. She was in a pink cast over her elbow for the next 4 weeks. The cast didn't slow her down as she went from crawling to independent walking with the cast on. And once she started walking she didn't stop and hasn't slowed down yet! We also found out in February that Robert was scheduled to deploy to Iraq for 6 months starting in late July. We immediately began preparations for his departure.

In March, we enjoyed the only snow of the whole winter and it was technically spring when it did snow. It snowed Easter Sunday! We had a nice day and Corinne enjoyed digging into her Easter basket... she headed straight for the candy...almost as if it was instinct!

Corinne continued to improve her walking and exploring skills in April. She tasted dirt for the first time too—Yummy! Along with dirt she continued to eat more and more solid foods and table foods. We also took our first trip to the local zoo. Corinne enjoyed the animals and the freedom to roam by herself. We have been back a few times since and she continues to have fun whenever we go.

In May, we enjoyed the nice weather and spent a lot of time in our yard – playing with balls, water, or the little red wagon along with working in the gardens. We spent the rest of the time getting Robert ready for his pre-deployment Combat Skills Training in June at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin and getting Davina and Corinne ready for their trip to the states.

Davina and Corinne wished Robert well as he headed off to training in Wisconsin at the end of May for 5 weeks. There he learned skills he might need to use while deployed to Iraq. Davina and Corinne then prepared for a 3 week stint to the states in June. They visited Davina's parents and sister Gloria in Phoenixville and then traveled with them to Ithaca to see Davina's other two sisters Jeanne and Katherine to celebrate Gloria's birthday in the city of her birth. Next Davina and Corinne headed to Akron to visit Robert's parents and his sister Amie and her boys. Corinne had a fun time with her cousins especially when they visited the water park. Davina and Corinne also visited their friend Dara and her family. It was another great trip to the USA!



Robert met Corinne and Davina at the airport when they returned to Germany in early July and so began our last month together before Robert's departure. Robert was able to take most of the month of July off to spend with the family. We went on a quick trip to Cologne to visit the zoo. It is a very nice zoo that they would love to visit again. We also went to the German Pretzel Festival. Yum! Robert departed on the 29th of July for Iraq. In August and September, Davina and Corinne settled into their new routine. They made several trips to the local playground and enjoyed a few picnics. Corinne was quite sick on Davina's birthday and Davina's friend, Emily, was kind enough to bring over a homemade dinner and dessert. It turned out to be a very nice birthday even if "you-know-who" was so far away. Speaking of which, we have been able to talk regularly and even have video calls about once a week with Robert. Corinne really enjoys seeing her Daddy and talking to him on the computer and on the phone. Davina can barely get a word in edgewise! In Iraq, Robert has experienced temperatures ranging from 127°F to 35°F, sandstorms like the ones in Hollywood movies, working with the Marines, Navy, & Army, interacting with Iraqi nationals, and much more. There he is working as the Head of the Communications Department in the Base Command Group. Robert is happy to be doing his part to help establish the seeds of democracy and freedom in Iraq. It is definitely an experience he will never forget. But, he is very much looking forward to getting home to his loving family.

In October, Davina and Corinne spent 4 weeks visiting all of Corinne's grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and some friends too! The trip started in Washington State visiting Robert's sister Debbie, her family, and Robert's parents. Then Davina and Corinne visited Davina's sister Katherine and her husband Brian in Oregon. From there they headed up to Alaska to see Davina's brother Michael, his family, Davina's parents, and Davina's sisters Gloria and Jeanne. Talk about a family reunion! The next stop was Virginia for a quick visit with Robert's sister Amie and her family. Lastly, they stopped in Ohio to visit Davina's aunts, Robert's brother Donny and his family, and an assortment of friends. It was a great trip. We really racked up the frequent flyer miles!

In November, Davina and Corinne recovered from the big October trip and got back into their routine. They enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner with Robert's boss and her husband. Corinne's talking really took a leap this month too. She surprises Mommy and Daddy everyday with new words and phrases. She really listens and repeats what she hears. We also passed the all important half-way mark of Robert's time in Iraq. It's downhill from there.

The first part of December Davina and Corinne spent wrapping gifts and getting them sent to Robert so he would receive them in time for Christmas. Davina and Corinne are looking forward to visits by Davina's parents and her sisters Gloria and Jeanne at the end of December. Davina continues to play piano at Sunday mass and is busily practicing, when Corinne allows her to, for the Christmas season. We hope you enjoyed the update...more photos are available on our family website at www.twogills.com. Lastly, we wish you and your family a blessed holiday season and a wonderful 2009!

Love,

Robert ...& Corinne
&
Davina

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