

New Year's Greetings!

Another gale force year has blown by. In one little 'ol year I've gotten out of the Army, moved twice, started two new jobs, and gotten married. That oughta be about enough for anyone! Through the high seas, however, I have steered by a steady star, and remained on my charted course. My port of destination has been the continuance and further development of my environmental career as a civilian, in Germany.

It was a "touch-and-go" there for a bit, after getting out of the Army. I had no full-time job for seven weeks before I received (and accepted) an environmental project management job offer from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Frankfurt. The Corps of Engineers is a predominately civilian organization that is managed (commanded) by Army engineer officers.

I write project "scopes of work", negotiate the contracts with private firms, conduct project meetings, steer projects through the governmental maze, and keep projects on schedule and within budget.

My function is not that of technical expert. I do however, review all the technical project reports. By reviewing the reports my technical knowledge also increases. All and all, the learning curve is quite steep. I'm having a great time with it too!

Though I've dropped anchor in a port of safe haven, I still haven't berthed the ship. My job position is a temporary appointment. I pretty well expect a permanent position to come my way but, there is no guarantee. Wish me luck!

Until (if and when) I get a permanent position, Susanne continues to live and work in Schweinfurt, about a two hours drive from Frankfurt. Susanne's job is secure and pays pretty well. We're not ready to give up the security her job affords us until I've got something solid. We see each other weekends. One weekend she comes to Frankfurt; the next, I go to Schweinfurt. It's not an ideal situation, but we're doing okay with it. If and when I get a permanent position, she'll find a job in the Frankfurt area, and we'll be together.

The Army Reserve (my second job) offers me a bit of additional security in the meantime. I entered the Army Reserve the day I came off active duty. If I were to lose my job with the Corps, I might be able to pick up a temporary active duty tour, for one to six months at a time.

It's amazing but, the American Army Reserve is big over here, in fact, Germany constitutes one of the Army Reserve's

"Major Commands" (MACOM). Most reservists over here are guys like me. Came over with the Army, married a German, and never went back. The fact that there are enough of us to support a Reserve MACOM just gives you an idea of how many GIs have rotated through Germany over the years.

The Reserve offers me the chance to fuse a part-time military career with my civilian career. I think I can build a synergy between the two that will bring me farther faster than either one alone possibly could. Besides the above reasons, the weekend pay is good, and most important of all, it's fun.

Throughout the year's stormy passage, my engagement and marriage with Susanne has my North Star. Our wedding shed the magic of my North Star light for all to see. All of Susanne's, and my closest family members were able to attend. My Brother performed the duty of Trauzuege (roughly best man) after German tradition.

We picked out a lovely little baroque church out in the middle of farm fields about half-way between Schweinfurt and Wuerzburg. It always reminds me of a ship plying the seas with its steeple mast and waves of rippling grain all about. I had noticed this church and found it quite striking from my earliest days in Schweinfurt. It appealed to my sense of spirituality with the sea--just right for a wedding.

The festivities, after the ceremony, were held in an old wine cellar, especially rennovated and outfitted for parties. The families took to each other, and were in a festive mood. Traditional German food was served. German folk music played. The Americans delighted the Germans with our traditional wedding toasts. My mother charmed all with her intuitive translation of "fill the tank"--vielen Dank! Michael (my brother-in-law), at my urging, pushed the hired musicians aside long enough to play a couple of originals, which the crowd loved. A rousing round of dancing followed. A Conga line brought every single guest to his feet. Cigars were smoked in the cool midnight air.

We were very fortunate to be able to share much our honeymoon travels with my mother, brother, sisters, and in-laws. There were some remarks about honeymooning with family but, Susanne and I couldn't have had a better time. Especially over here, it is such a treat to see anything of the family.

My mother has a friend with an old house in the Swiss Alps. Her friend offered the use of the house. We snapped up that opportunity, and arranged our travel plans accordingly. We all spent three or four days there hiking, dining out, taking day trips, and just lounging around. Switzerland is wonderful.

We then began to go our separate ways. But, Susanne and I did meet My mother, and my brother and his family for three days in Venice. Venice is incredible.

We were then to all meet up once again in Florence. Just outside of Vicenza however, my car started acting up. Nothing serious, after 60,000 miles it just needed a new distributor cap. But, a distributor cap for my built-for-America Toyota was not available, even at the Vicenza Toyota dealer! I had a distributor cap federal expressed from the U.S. but, even so it took five days to arrive. All was not lost, however. We explored Vicenza, and took day trips by train and bus to Verona and Padua. By the time I got my distributor cap and got the car running again, it was time to head back to Germany. So, we're looking forward to going back to Italy to complete our itinerary!

We spent Thanksgiving with my sister Nancy and her family, and my cousin Joey. Nancy and family spend every fourth year in Paris directing Hamilton Colleges's Junior Year in Paris Program. Joey just happens to be enrolled in the program this year! We hauled a 20-lbs, Butterball turkey from the Army commissary with us for the occasion!

For the coming year, I'm looking at trying to do some volunteer work with a hydrology professor from the University of Wuerzburg. He thinks he could use me to do some menial data entry work on a computer driven groundwater modeling project. What's in it for me? Exposure to computer modeling and hydrology at the research level. One project could lead to another. The level of work I perform in projects could increase. I might get the opportunity to conduct some field hydrogeology, something sorely lacking in my professional background. In short, I might learn something! Don't really know if it'll all work out. Wuerzburg is one and a half hours away. I've already committed one weekend a month to the Reserves, when will I see my lovely wife?

In closing, My life is the same as before and yet, vastly different. I'm still doing environmental work, still seeing the same girl, still a soldier. My life and my course however, have become our life and our course. Through the stormy seas Susanne has been my strength, the bulkheads holding my ship fast against the angry waves and perilous depths. The strength she gives me places her at the center of my successes and achievements. Together, the seven seas are ours...

The time one spends at sailing is not deducted from life.
Old sailors' saying

Wishing you fair winds and calm seas in 1995,