

THE MARTIN FAMILY

SNOW, RAIN AND TRACTION CONTROL

SWITZERLAND

September 28, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that this week finds you happy, healthy and full of vim and vigor. At the end of the last letter, Nazy and Dan were at the bottom of a ravine in the Dolomites. Nazy had been upended by a rogue boulder. (We can confirm that said rogue had no affiliation with the Tea Party or Sarah Palin.) The clumsy tourist (not part of our group) who inadvertently dislodged the boulder eventually joined us and apologized. Nazy, mobile and mostly okay, was generous and friendly. I skipped stones on the lake (my bruised bottom made it impossible to sit.) Nazy and I reviewed the situation as we waited for our group to slide down.

“Wow!” I exclaimed. “You were really lucky, Nazy.”

“Lucky? I got hit by a boulder and now I’m covered with bruises and scrapes.”

“It could have been worse.”

“It could have been better.”

“Well..”

“It could have missed me...”

“But then it would have hit me,” I thought.

“You’re right! You’re not in as great shape as me. If it hit you, we’d never get downhill.”

“Downhill?” I thought, suddenly realizing that we had to get back to the hotel. “Luckily..”

“Luckily, Dan? You still think this was lucky?”

“**Luckily**, my dear it is only a short walk to the cable car. We can ride down to the hotel.”

“We came to hike, Dan. It’s downhill from here. Shall we walk down?”

“Did you mean to end that sentence with a question mark?” I asked.

“We shall walk down.”

“Yes, dear.” I replied. *“She also had a word-order problem,”* I thought.

In fact, it was a mere 5 minute stroll from the lake to the cable car. The hike to be village (far) below was much more than a stroll. We followed the ski slope, a



predictable, if lengthy, incline that was hard on the thighs and toes. We arrived in time to..

“Shop in the village, Dan!” Nazy noted.

MIRACLE REPORT: Nazy could not find anything that she wanted to buy.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” I asked as we made our way from the shops to the hotel. I was concerned about the anomalous behavior.

Back at the hotel, Nazy booked a massage that cost more than the room.

“*Now, she seems to be okay,*” I thought. “Did you know that the massage cost more than the room?” I asked.

“Did you know that I deserve a better room?”

“Really?”

“Or a better hotel?”

Nazy returned rejuvenated. We had a nice meal and a very long night’s sleep. Getting up was, eh, problematic because no one’s thigh muscles expressed any interest in bending, contracting or flexing. Creatively, I rolled onto the floor and used my arms to hoist myself upright. Once nervous and muscle system control was re-established, I moved the desk chair to Nazy’s side of the bed and rolled her to the shower. I noticed that it was raining.

“*Oh Drat!*” I thought. “*We won’t be able to hike through the mountains today.*”

We decided to drive to Cortina, the major ‘city’ in this touristy part of Italy. And, since it was a tourist area, we assumed that the shops would be open in spite of the fact that it was Sunday. Moreover:

“This is merely a light rain, Nazy.” I explained. “I’m sure it will clear up.”

The shops weren’t open and the rain turned **heavy**. The only thing that we could find to buy was a cup of hot chocolate and an (unhealthy but tasty) apple tart. We admired the city’s church (and lit a few candles for good luck). We drove back to the hotel in time to take a nap. (This was about all the ‘exercise’ we could handle.)

One more night in Italy was planned, so Nazy asked the hotel clerk about the weather. (Would we be able to hike again?) **SNOW** was predicted. I was incredulous.

“Snow, Nazy? Don’t be absurd. It was 16°C (60°F) yesterday. I was sweating when we got down from the mountain.”

“That sweat was from fear. Not heat.”

“Well.. if it does snow, it won’t stick to the roads. **You can count on that!**”

“We don’t have snow tires, maybe we should leave now. What do you think, Dan?”



“I think you need to have your head examined.”

The view that we encountered in the morning was....

“One, two, three..” Nazy began

“What are you doing?”

“I am counting on that.”

We quickly checked out, pushed six inches of snow off the car, loaded the bags and fired up Claudia (the navigation computer). I agreed to push while Nazy used the rudder to position the car on the road. I eyed the small upslope in front of the hotel.

“Remember: once I get you moving, do not stop. Do not stop. Go to the top. Don't stop.”

I put shoulder to bumper and, with superhuman strength forged through an impeccable exercise routine, I put the car in motion. As momentum increased, Nazy stepped on the brake.

“Why (pray tell) did you stop?” I asked calmly.

“There is a red light on the dashboard.”

“I know. That light says that the traction control is engaged.”

It took five large and strong men from the hotel to get the car moving (uphill) again. We drove through about 50 kilometers of heavy, wet snow before the precipitation changed to rain. Claudia, enjoying the thrill, kept directing us into the brunt of the storm. We eventually made our way to Austria (and the traditional traffic jam) and subsequently to home.

It was a trip that we won't forget soon.

Take care and Cheers,

Dan



View from Hotel Balcony



Nazy and ? in Cortina



Claudia