

THE MARTIN FAMILY

(NEW AND IMPROVED)

SWITZERLAND

September 4, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are happy and healthy. During the last week, we enjoyed beautiful weather in Zürich. But we know that we're on the threshold of major seasonal change. The days will be getting shorter. If you're a tree leaf, your days are numbered. Change is in the air! Of course, not all change is good:

Houston 1985

The Martin Family, recently relocated from Vancouver, was settling in at Memorial Drive. I was driving home from my job at the Schlumberger facility on the Gulf Freeway. The outside temperature was 23 billion degrees and relative humidity was 1530%. The air conditioning on my Datsun 280Z only worked when the car was moving. Since I was on the on West Loop of I-610 at rush hour, the Z-car was not moving. My left ankle was in a cast and my leg was swelling up. The discomfort index - a meteorological metric designed to measure unpleasantness - was pegged at the Hades-level. As steam started to spew from the radiator, I glanced at my cast and thought about the situation.

"Run laps, Nazy said. You'll get into better shape. I never should have listened. I broke my ankle running laps. Nobody should run laps in Houston.." I shut down the AC, opened the window and took a deep breath of engine exhaust. "It **can't** get worse," I said to myself. I turned the radio on:

"BEEP, BEEP, BEEP. Please stand by for an emergency announcement. BEEP"

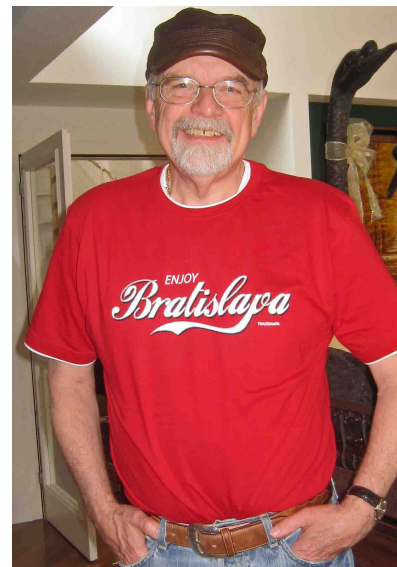
"That sounds ominous," I thought.

Somber music began to play on KIKK (650AM). And then: "Live from Atlanta, Georgia an momentous announcement from executive management at Coca Cola Inc."

The Coke executives introduced **New Coke**. More ominously, the company declared that "**Old Coke**" was being retired. I was so distraught that I reached for my iPhone before I even remembered that it hadn't been invented yet. More productively, I altered my plans and drove directly to the Randall's grocery store.

(The fact that I voluntarily drove to a grocery store indicates the dire nature of the catastrophe)

I grabbed a grocery cart - I chose the hefty Main Battle Cart - and pushed my way to the soft drink aisle. My shoulders slumped when I noticed that the **Coca Cola** shelves were bare. I ignored the sobbing, wailing crowd of dubious hoarders and kept my eye open for my opportunity. I spotted a fork lift heading my way. It had case upon case of **Coca Cola**. I pushed my way through the clueless crowd and grabbed as many cases as I could fit in my cart.





just after I checked out, a police squad rushed into the supermarket. I heard an official proclamation about a new one-case limit on Coca Cola purchases.

"Too late to stop me," I thought as I pushed my fully loaded battle cart to the car. However, the battle cart was bigger than the Datsun. There was no room and I couldn't leave my valuable coke on the pavement. Then, I spotted Nazy's car; she was shopping with the kids. We were facing an emergency, so I ejected the kids, filled Nazy's car with the excess coke and sent each family member into Randall's to get 'their' one case. It took a couple of trips to get everything safely home.

At the office the next day, I discovered that **New Coke** had infiltrated the vending machines. (Except for the one in the sonic tool testing area - a fact that I kept to myself after hiding the machine behind a LAN server.) I called an emergency staff meeting and authorized a complete (and immediate) inventory of all telecom and network devices. I reviewed the project objectives with James and Hershel:

"... and, if you happen to find any 'old coke', note the location and await my instructions.."

Judicious caution marked the next months as I carefully managed my slowly vanishing inventory of illicit **Coca Cola**. Eventually, but uncharacteristically, Coke Inc bowed to public demand. They decided to sell a product that its customers wanted. *Coca Cola* Classic returned to the shelves and planetary human happiness increased dramatically.

Zurich 2011

CNN's Becky Anderson was in **Connect The World** mode: "Twinings, the English tea company, has introduced a new and 'improved' version of its Earl Grey. The new version, called 'The Earl Grey' is expected..."



Anticipating an explosion from Nazy, an established Earl Grey tea drinker, I covered behind a mammoth pillow on the sofa. There was no response.

"Doesn't that bother you, Nazy?" I inquired, lifting my head above the parapet.

"I'm not a fan of Twinings, Dan. I don't like teabags. Brewed tea is.."

"They've added extra bergamot and lemon flavor," I continued.

"That means that the tea will have an oily film on the surface."

"... customers say that the new blend tastes like vile dishwater..." Becky continued. "But Twinings says that the new tea, with increased bergamot is light and refreshing..."

"Hmm.. 'light and refreshing' in the same sentence as 'bergamot'," I thought.

"Twinings doesn't know anything about tea."

"Well, dear, Twimings is the biggest tea company in the world. And English people like tea. You've heard of English Breakfast Tea, right?"

"English people put milk in the tea; they don't know anything."



It was an example of marketing gone awry. Luckily for me, Splenda®, absolutely critical to good ice tea, hasn't changed their secret formula. They merely changed the colors on the box and tweaked the font on the packaging. (The 'new look' is simply the red triangle on the upper left of the box.) Other change was in the air.



A few weeks ago, Nazy noted that our landline telephone....

Young readers unfamiliar with landline telephones can check:
http://www.ehow.com/about_5583904_landline-telephone_.html

... was acting strange. Batteries in the cordless handset wouldn't charge. We took the defective instrument to Swisscom. Their clerk explained that if you want the batteries to recharge, then you must install rechargeable batteries.

"Why didn't I think of that?" I thought.

The clerk moved into 'sales mode' as I was ready to leave. I grabbed Nazy's hand - too late. The fateful words had been spoken.

"It is a sale, Mrs. Martin," the clerk said. "You can take advantage of a huge bargain."

As Nazy switched into negotiation mode, I spotted a Red Sox game on the Swisscom TV display. I also had a fully charged iPad with an extensive library. In due course, Nazy agreed to a Swisscom offer combining internet, mobile phone, cable TV and landline capability into one gargantuan service. The new service required installation by a qualified professional.

In a shocking and totally unexpected development, Wolfgang, the technician, installed a fully functional service on his very first trip. Somehow he found a way to pull the necessary cables along the I-beams that held the Swiss-standard very solid walls. When he was done - everything actually worked. I thought he was perfect until...

"That, Nazy," he exclaimed as he pointed, "is too old."

"I hope you're not talking about me." I interjected.

Wolfgang smiled. "You need a good TV. A new Samsung can do High Definition and 3D. You can connect it to the LAN and play music or display pictures from your laptop."

"My husband tried that with an Apple TV, but he screwed it up."

"I did not screwup anything, Nazy! Wolfgang says our TV is too old."

Nazy asked Wolfgang for his business card. "I think we should check out new TVs at Media Markt,"

"This TV is only 5 years old, The previous TV lasted for 18 years," I noted.

"You get what you pay for," Wolfgang replied. "You're saving a lot with this package, so.."

Take Care and Cheers,