

THE MARTIN FAMILY

CARMENSTRASSE, 48

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SWITZERLAND

April 17, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you're well and happy. In **Switzerland**, I am happy to say, we continue to enjoy a delightful Spring. The **flowers** are in bloom, the sun is shining and all's right with the world. Thoughtful readers asked questions about the April 10 edition of *The Weekly Letter*. Always alert to readership requests, I have inserted an aside into this week's epistle:

Aside

Question: "You have been married for 39 years.."

Interruption: "... almost 39 years..."

Question: ".. Whatever. How could you possibly purchase an unwanted birthday present? Were you paying attention?"

Answer: The gift selection procedure was progressing smoothly. "*This*," I thought as I took the escalator to the 4th floor of the Jelmoli department store, "*is like Swiss Clockwork*." Well-prepared, I had earlier committed Nazy's desire to memory. I knew exactly where the designer item was located. When I arrived, however, the selection had vanished. At that moment I realized that things were going like Medieval Swiss Clockwork. "*It's raining on my sundial*," I thought. Eventually, **I found the correct designer**. As I discovered later, however, I bought the wrong thing, in the wrong size, wrong color and wrong pattern. [I had memorized where the present was located. I had not memorized what the present was.] Events that took place during the purchase left me feeling somewhat queasy: the sales clerk insisted that I be "extremely careful" with the receipt. She reminded me (several times) that exchanges were possible "within 10 days" of purchase.

Question: "So, you screwed up."

Answer: "Of course, not. Nazy is very happy with the designer windowsill herb garden that she found in exchange."

Question: "I repeat myself: Were you paying attention?"

Answer: "This 'aside' has taken up too much space in The Weekly Letter."

Because the weather was so spectacular, we decided that it would be 'dumb' to sit at home. After conferring with friends, Persuasively, Nazy suggested a trip to:



“Meersburg, Dan.”

“Where’s that?” I asked.

“It’s on the Bodensee.”

“Lake Constance, right?” I replied.

“An easy 1 hour drive.”

“Is it in Austria?”

“I think it’s in Germany..”

“Germany?”

“... or Switzerland, You take a ferry to get there.” Nazy concluded.

Once we figured out the correct country (Germany) and the correct spelling for the ferry terminal (Konstanz), the drive, directed by Claudia (the navigation automaton), was quick and smooth. Remarkably, there was no queue at the ferry, we arrived and drove directly onto the boat. We parked our car when we arrived in Meersburg, a pedestrian destination.

Meersburg (which means ‘castle on the sea’) is famous for its two castles. One (the old castle) was built in 630AD by King Dagobert I. (I did not make up that name.) The other, the new castle, is a baroque residence that was constructed in the 18th century. The castles are located at the top of a cliff and can be accessed by a set of (one zillion) steps, or by a single, very steep road.

The lower part of the city is adjacent to Lake Constance. We had lunch (the fish was excellent) and snacks (the apple strudel was divine) and, amazingly, Nazy somehow found time to shop. While Nazy perused hand-painted Easter Eggs, fashionable clothing and antique jewelry, I found a **Rubber Ducky** Store where I suggested an addition to our collection.

“We need,” I explained to Nazy, “a (Rubber) Scrooge McDuck(y).”

The New Castle was undergoing renovation, but we were able to walk through the Old Castle. According to the guide book, in some places, the walls were three meters thick. We saw an interesting collection of armor and weapons from the middle ages.





“This reminds me of my time at HP,” I thought. “After selling something to the customer, it was always a battle to convince HP to take the money and deliver the service.”

The ferry back to Konstanz was quick and smooth. We walked through the city center and then drove home.

During the weekend, Zürich began the annual Sechsheuten celebration - a festival that marks the end of Winter.

Things began with the Children’s Parade on Sunday. Costumes and Marching Bands abound. Traditionally, the kids pass out candy to bystanders as parade through the streets.

The approach taken by the parading children vary. by sex. The girls usually smilingly flounce to a kids who is plaintively holding out his hand and while appearing hungry and a little sad. The girl hands out a piece of chocolate.

(As soon as the girl turns her back, the kid hands the chocolate to his mother. She stuffs it into a huge back chock-full of candy. The kid resets his plaintive look and sticks out his hand.)

The boys, in contrast, heave **hard** candy at bystanders who are not paying attention. The boys want to hear a satisfying ‘crack’ and a growled “Ouch!”.

“Ouch!” I growled. (My actual grown was somewhat less bland.)

“Dan?” Nazy asked as she grabbed my arm.
“What are you doing?”

“You spoiled my aim,” I muttered.

The parade ends with a float containing The Bōōg, a ‘snowman’ that represents Winter. The Bōōg will be placed on top of the bonfire planned for the next day.

Take care and Cheers,

Dan

