

# THE MARTIN FAMILY

CARMENSTRASSE, 48

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## SWITZERLAND

April 23, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that this note finds you healthy and happy. Spring in Zürich continues to be spectacular - the sun is shining, the skies are blue, the flowers are colorful and... well, it's the same as last week and the weeks before. it was time to put things to the test:

"It's Sechsleuten, Dan." Nazy explained. "We have to see the parade."

"Yes dear." I replied. "*It will be too crowded and we'll be standing for hours,*" I thought.

"And the bonfire," Nazy continued.

"Yes dear," I replied. "*Whoopie!*" I thought.

"I'm sure that the bonfire will predict a warm summer."

"Sweltering!" I mumbled.

"What did you say?" Nazy asked.

"Splendid," I replied. "I said 'splendid'."

In Zürich, the Sechsleuten Celebration marks the end of winter. The event is celebrated with two parades, a Sunday children's event (described last week) and a Monday adult parade that ends in front of the Opera House. Mounted (horse and camel) guildsman gallop around a bonfire topped by The Bōōg. At precisely 6:00PM (the 'sechs' from sechsleuten), the bonfire is lit and a fully certified chronometer begins ticking.

The Bōōg, which looks like a snowman and constructed using ancient blueprint, contains embedded explosives. In time, the bonfire expands to envelope The Bōōg - thereby setting off the explosive charges. The length of time that it takes for the head to explode is said to predict the warmth of the coming summer. It exploded quickly this year which means..

"July and August will be unbearably hot," I said.

"I know," Nazy enthused. "It will be a warm and beautiful summer."

"*Unbearable = beautiful?*" I thought. "I wish that we had air conditioning," I replied.



This year's parade and bonfire was marked by a decidedly non-Swiss event. The parade ended almost 40 minutes after 6:00 PM - a miscue of cosmic proportion. Thus, the Bōög actually exploded before the parade ended. A **PEB** (Parade Efficiency Bureau) has been formed identify the culprits and propose solutions. Culprit identification will not be difficult: culprit = ancient guildsman, eh, guildfogies who ~~marched, walked, strolled, moseyed, meandered, sauntered, ambled~~ ~~o~~zed in the general direction of the procession. (All of the verbs in the previous sentence have been crossed out because they convey the impression of movement. Motion was best discerned by observing lengthening shadows resulting from planetary rotation.)

Unexpected events are common (and hence should be expected) at Sechsleuten. One year the bonfire was washed out by a strong thunderstorm; army flamethrowers were called in as backup. A few years ago, anarchists ...

Reader Interrupt

"Anarchists? in Zürich? Is that permitted?"

"Correction follows.

End Reader Interrupt

A few years ago, an anarchist (i.e. one, not several) kidnapped the Bōög. The kidnapper was, like the local populace, surprised to discover that at least one backup Bōög is stashed in a nearby safe house.

Sechsleuten events feature unbridled joy and fun especially for the young participants. Just look at the thrilled and happy faces of the costumed paraders at the right. You can almost see one of them thinking: "*Is this over yet?*"



Back home, after a scrumptious meal, I asked Nazy about dessert.

"Dessert? You just had a meal with **vegetables**.."

"*My excitement is unbounded,*" I thought.

"... a mixed salad and healthy, omega-friendly, fish. What is wrong with you?"

"Nothing," I replied. "*Nothing that couldn't be fixed with cake, pie, ice cream,*" I thought about to cry.

Seeing my lips quivering, Nazy changed her mind: "I'll make a banana bread, Dan."

Later, smelling the delightful fragrance of baking banana bread. I peeked in the oven.

"This doesn't look right," I said - pointing.

"I know," Nazy replied. "I've baked it far longer than the recipe requires, but..."

"It looks soggy," I replied.

"It can't be soggy. This recipe is for '*The World's Greatest*' banana bread."

"It's a small world," I muttered. "Did you forget the baking soda?"

There was a shocked look on Nazy's face. "How do **you** know about baking soda?"

"That's a fair question," I replied.

### **Flashback 1957**

Eisenhower was President and little Danny Martin was helping his mother make a chocolate cake 'from scratch'.

"Why, Mommy," he asked. "Why do we need baking soda? It's a very small amount and with all this other stuff, do we really need it?"

"The baking soda makes the cake rise without it, the cake will be soggy."

"Ah ha!" Danny replied committing this highly relevant and helpful fact to permanent memory.

### **End Flashback**

"It's something my Mom taught me," I replied.

"Really?"

"We were baking a.."

"... cake, right?"

Nazy grabbed the recipe book noting that 'baking soda' was a key (albeit small) ingredient. "I just missed it," she explained.

*"Probably wouldn't have missed tomatoes in a salad,"* I thought.

"We can have yoghurt instead," Nazy continued.

"For dessert?" I replied, cakeless.

For Easter, Nazy and I are driving to Easter(n) Europe. More next week.

Take care and Cheers,