

THE MARTIN FAMILY

FLOWERS IN RIBEAUVILLE

SWITZERLAND

9 July 2011

Dear Reader,

I trust that that you are healthy and happy. We've had another great week as part of a wonderful summer. Recall that at the end of the last edition of The Weekly Letter, Nazy and I were at dinner in Colmar at the La Maison des Têtes Restaurant (pictured).

Nazy was initially dismayed because salad was not part of the standard menu, Naturally, however, she was able to negotiate an exception; she ordered a mixed green **salad** for each of us. (*"Isn't that just great?"* I thought.) We both ordered seafood as the main course and we shared an Apple Crepe for dessert. (When I say 'share', I do not mean to imply equal shares.) A bottle of local Riesling accompanied the meal. It was time for the bill - which arrived on a **sterling silver** tray. I gasped as I reviewed the invoice.

"This is extremely reasonable, Nazy."

"Reasonable? In France?"

"It's actually cheap."

"Cheap? You took me to a cheap restaurant?"

"I meant to say inexpensive. Well, **great value for money**, my dear."

The attractive price resulted from a favorable Franc/€uro exchange rate. Euro-zone challenges in Greece (where no one pays taxes), Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Italy conspired to reduce investor confidence. The currency of the United States (where everyone except investment bankers pay taxes) has fallen faster and further. [One US\$ bought 1.74 Swiss Francs when we arrived; now one US\$ buys 0.83 Swiss Francs.] Swiss currency is popular because people realize that the exit strategy for the Dollar and Euro involves default or devaluation. The strong Franc does create a business challenge in Switzerland. About 40 years ago, Swiss banks 'offered' negative interest to non-residents with Franc accounts. Since we are residents, we can earn 1.25%. But, I digress.

Returning to Colmar, we visited 'Little Venice' where Nazy wanted to embark on a boat ride along the 'canal'. The canal was only three feet deep and the 'gondoliers' spoke French. The skiffs were propelled with an electric motor that had less mouse-power than a Kitchenaid mixer. But the excursion was picturesque: we especially enjoyed the flowers.

Following precedent, Nazy had planned our excursion to France. (Why mess with a winning formula?) After Colmar, Nazy suggested a side trip to nearby Ribeauville. I supported this plan wholeheartedly:

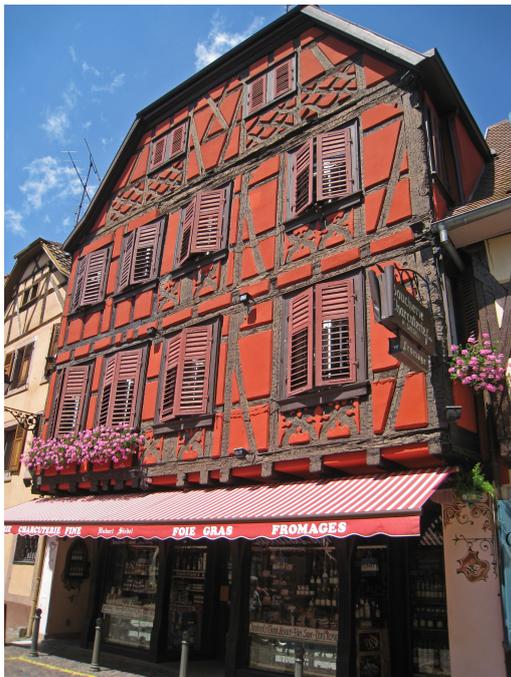


“Is there anything in Ribeauville?” I asked.

“Storks, Dan.”

“I can’t wait.”

Ribeauville, in the middle of Alsace wine-country, is a beautiful village. The buildings are brightly colored:



We had lunch at (appropriately named) Chez Martine on the Main Street. Then we strolled through the village. Even though it was Sunday, Nazy found a shop selling porcelain roosters. (We bought one for her collection.) We also saw several (live) storks. A local told us that the storks used to migrate to Africa for the winter, but..

“Then they stopped returning in the Spring.”

“Why?”

“The Africans ate them.”

“*That’ll do it.*” I thought.

“So we built nests and encouraged the storks to stay in France.”

“*Encouraged*” I thought.

“And the population has stabilized.”

After our adventure in **flowerful France**, we returned to **Zürich** where I faced a week of danger and risk. Nazy, failing



(totally) to grasp the significance and danger associated with the pending menace, had little sympathy.

“Zahra is a dental hygienist, Dan. It will not hurt.”

“Zahra is a dental hygienist, Nazy. It **will** hurt. She warned me about a complete and thorough...”

“...don't be afraid, Danny Boy..”

“... She said that she'd be using **heavy equipment**.”

“I don't believe it.”

“She told me to bring a pint of my own blood to replenish..”

“Dan!”

“She's going to use an ax on the plaque and a jackhammer to get under my gums. I'll be a drooling, quivering hulk ~~when~~, eh, **if** I can crawl out of her office.”

Although I realized that I was being somewhat, okay, overly dramatic, my courage faltered when Zahra fastened leg and arm restraints. Then she used an elephant-certified syringe for several Novocain injections. To be perfectly truthful, my teeth did not hurt during the procedure: my teeth (jaw, nose, face, upper head) were numb. But, as Zahra adjusted her grip for better leverage, she wedged her latex glove against my beard. As she twisted the water cannon, friction between the latex glove and my beard uprooted several whiskers. Eventually it ended. Zahra asked me to 'rinse out'.

“The entire top half of my face is numb,” I thought. “Rinse out? I can't even form a water-tight seal with my lips. I'm dribbling into what is left of my beard.”

I met Nazy a short time later.

“Why isn't your mouth perpendicular to your nose?” She asked.

“Novocain hasn't worn off and I can't tell where my mouth is,” I thought. “Mrphvey qkartle” I said.

“And your beard is scraggily. It looks like a lawn fertilized with random dollops of herbicide.”

“Herbicide?” I thought. “Rasquapple mergleferd.” I said.

“Is that **blood** dripping from your mustache? You're really going to be in pain when the anesthetic wears off.”

“You said it wouldn't hurt,” I thought.

Photos from our trip to France are now online:

Colmar: http://www.seat26b.com/Seat26b/Colmar_Photos.html
Ribeauville: http://www.seat26b.com/Seat26b/Ribeauville_photos.html

Take care and Cheers,