

# THE MARTIN FAMILY

HAPPY IN

## SWITZERLAND

July 17, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are healthy, happy and prosperous. We are enjoying a summer full of flowers and visits to colorful **cities**. Readers of last week's edition of The Weekly Letter had questions. I will focus only two themes.

### Theme 1 Collections

Nazy's collection of porcelain roosters was referenced in last week's letter. There was some (chicken-hearted) skepticism about the existence of the collection. This incredulity is misplaced. In fact, to demonstrate the total veracity of the assertion, I recorded the following conversation on my iPhone:

"A porcelain rooster?" I asked. "Don't we already have one of those?"

"Of course. I want to add to my collection."

"Why don't we get a ceramic caterpillar instead?"

"A caterpillar?"

"And a terra cotta butterfly. Then we'll have a biological set."

"Do you like the white rooster or the one with the red **wattles** and **comb**?"

We already bought a rubber duck for your rubber duck collection and a thimble for your thimble collection - even though there is no place to put new thimbles."

"Thimbles are small, Dan. You got a pewter soldier for your collection. Did you really need that? And you collect tropical fish."

"You can't run out of space for tropical fish. I get new ones when the old ones die...."

"You get new ones after you kill the old ones."

"Nazy! Let's stick to the point. Do you need a rooster?"

"Okay, Dan! Let's forget the rooster..."

"*Victory!*" I thought. Prematurely. [Readers can feel free to marvel at the ability of my iPhone to record non-verbal communication.]



Thimble Collection



Pewter Soldier Collection

“...let’s find a jewelry store.”

“Jewelry?”

“For my diamond collection, Dan.”

“I like the rooster with the red **comb**.”

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## Theme 2 - The Dental Hygienist

I felt that readers familiar with dentistry would sympathize with the pain and suffering that I endured when a dental hygienist used a chainsaw and high-intensity explosives. I was wrong. *Some* readers, rather than praising my braverism, slyly suggested that years (or, decades) of personal inattention led directly to the crisis. To these people, I say “Pooh!”

“Pooh? You say: ‘Pooh’?”

“Precisely. This is the kind of aspersion that can be expected from people who saved for college educations and built a solid financial foundation for retirement.”

“And?”

“There are not very many people like that. In short, these expressed opinions represent a minority position.”

“An accurate minority?”

“Painfully accurate. But beside the point.”

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In other developments, I’m happy to report that Zürich is hosting the normally Berne-based, giant spider sculpture. The artist, Louise Bourgeois, would have been 100 years old this year. the bronze *Spinne* (German word for spider), is almost 10 meters high. It’s nicknamed “Mother” (*Maman*) and is installed at Burkliplatz near the lake. Nazy and I ‘had’ to see it because..

“It’s there, Dan.” Nazy explained.

“We walk to town frequently, Nazy. We need not make a special trip.”

Then, it began to rain. Our special trip was cancelled, but we made a short detour during our next walk. Nazy noted that the statue had “8 legs”.

“A characteristic of arachnids,” I replied.

Maman, the Spinne



“Smartas..” Nazy retorted.

Finally, the Casa Carmen kitchen is in total disarray. Several weeks ago a replacement dishwasher was (almost) installed. The new device was exactly the same size as the under-counter opening where placement was planned. Naturally, this made for a tight fit and increased complexity in the installation process. After a few weeks, we noticed that the hardwood floor in the kitchen...

“Hardwood floor in the kitchen?”

“I am just reporting the facts. There is a hardwood floor in the kitchen.”

“Why?”

“Can I just continue?”

“Okay.”

... had begun to buckle. After the plumber fixed the defective (and leaky) connection between a hot water pipe and the dishwasher, a carpenter dislodged oak slats from large areas of the kitchen. We were told to wait two weeks for the under-floor to dry. A week later, Nazy noticed that the floor was still wet.

“Don’t worry,” I said. “It will take a long time to dry out.”

Then the dishwasher stopped working. The electronic control panel displayed “Err -20”. While I looked inside the machine, Nazy consulted the owners manual.

“*I can’t believe that she found the manual,*” I thought. “It’s not draining,” I shouted just before banging my head.

“*I can’t believe there’s a section in English,*” Nazy thought. “Error -20 means that it’s not draining properly,” Nazy replied.

“That’s what I said! What does the manual suggest?”

“We need to make a service call.”

Nazy translated the explanation given by the German serviceman.

“He says that the drain was blocked by a **pistachio** shell. I told you to be careful.”

“Ask him how a huge shell got through **his** filter and into the drain pipe.” I replied.

“He says it’s your fault.”

“You translated that before he said anything.”

Take care and Cheers,

Dan