

THE MARTIN FAMILY

FATHER'S DAY IN COLMAR, FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

3 July 2011

Dear Reader,

The planet continues to hurdle along in an orbital path determined by Newton's Law of Gravity (as adjusted by Einstein). I hope that nothing untoward has happened and that you are well and healthy. An unplanned family experiment here in Switzerland has shown that some events are determined by earlier actions which appeared (at the time) to be unconnected. It's like the law of gravity. For example:

Dan at the Swimming Pool	Nazy Grocery Shopping
<i>"It was a great result from the comprehensive physical exam," I thought as I swam laps. "I'm in better shape than I was at college. In the last five years, I've been swimming at least 4 times a week. If I added it all up, I've probably swam the distance from Memphis to New Orleans - assuming a strong current. I am one healthy guy."</i>	Nazy was in the COOP supermarket where she was reading the German labels on various boxes of cereal. <i>"I'm happy that Dan got a good report from his doctor. It's because he eats good food now. He's home and I am very careful about what I prepare."</i> Nazy dropped her cereal selection into the cart.

A few hours later

Back from my early morning swim, I was in the kitchen helping Nazy prepare breakfast. When I opened the refrigerator to get a couple of eggs for Nazy I saw a large and inviting flask of Vermont Maple Syrup. *"I feel like waffles,"* I thought.

"Would you like cereal?" Nazy asked.

"Hmm," I replied as I checked the cupboard to review my cereal options. *"All Bran - yuck."* I thought -well, I thought that I thought. But actually:

"All Bran?! Yuck! Who bought this?" I said.

"What did you say?" Nazy interjected quietly.

"Dew wrought bliss, my dear."

"I choose **All Bran** because it is good for you. It has fiber.."

"A cotton boll has fiber." I thought. Carefully!

"...lignin and pectic are resistant to the action of digestive enzymes and they.."

"... have no taste.."

“... are good for you. I know you would prefer something like Sugar Bombs™...”

“*Hmm, that does sound good.*”

“... or waffles. I saw you gazing at the maple syrup. You can just stuff whatever you want into your mouth. Don’t even think about health.”

“Great! Thanks!” I said, grabbing the syrup.

Question for readers: Why do problems arise when you do exactly what your wife tells you to do?

Reader Response: Did Nazy actually eat two eggs?

Author Answer: Nazy ate two egg whites.

Regular readers will recall that this year’s Father’s Day celebration was decidedly low-key. (We didn’t do anything.) We corrected that situation with a high-key expedition this weekend. We decided to drive to Colmar, France, the home of Frédéric Bartholdi, the sculptor who designed the Statue of Liberty.

Google Maps™ indicated that we would have a short and easy drive via Basel. Claudia, the navigation computer on the family car was equally sanguine - when we began. But, as I entered the A1 (direction Basel), Nazy reported a problem.

“Claudia can’t find the address of our hotel.”

It turned out that although Claudia *had pretended to know* the location of Colmar, she was, in fact, essentially clueless. Blissfully unaware (and completely inept), she directed us past the “Colmar City Centre” exit. Eight kilometers later, motorway departure (at the Industrie Exit), was mandated by Claudia. We turned left at the end of the exit.

“Route is in the indicated [←] direction,” Claudia announced. A giant rotating arrow appeared in the navigation display. The accompanying map was completely devoid of ..

“Where are the roads?” Nazy asked.

“Route is in the indicated [↑] direction,” Claudia whimpered.

“Claudia!” I exclaimed. “I think that Claudia has early-stage dementia,” I whispered.

“Route is in the indicated [↔] direction,” Claudia mumbled.

“We’ll have to follow signs,” Nazy said.

“But we’re in France, Nazy. The signs won’t be useful.”

“Route is in the indicated [↕→←] direction,” Claudia sniveled.

I masterfully maneuvered the car to



the city centre before remembering that our hotel was located “just outside the city”. Following a well-established family tradition, Nazy agreed to ask a native for directional assistance. Nazy returned to the car and, vaguely waving her arm to the right said that we “should go that way”.

“Route is in the indicated [➡] direction,” Claudia bleated - having clearly overheard Nazy’s conversation.

It turned out that France is on navigation DVD-1. We left Zürich under the guidance of DVD-2 (which has Germany and Switzerland). (It would have been nice if Claudia had been programmed to alert drivers about the issue.) Because the arm-waving directions didn’t work, we had to ‘re-boot’ Claudia with DVD-1. The reboot takes 5 minutes and cannot be done unless the key is removed from the car.

After a neuron update and memory restoration, Claudia flawlessly directed us to the hotel. We checked in and walked out. We wanted to enjoy Alsace. Colmar is a small, but beautiful city which has somehow been spared wartime destruction for hundreds of years. The centre of the city is dominated by the massive Gothic..

“Saint **Martin**’s Cathedral, Nazy! How did they know that we were coming?”

“It has nothing to do with you Dan.”

“How do you know?”

“You’re not a Saint.”

“Really? Would you like to stop at the supermarket to buy some legumes?”

A canal that ~~runs~~, eh, flows through Colmar links the city to the Rhine. The part that we saw was less than a meter deep, so I do not believe that we’re talking about a navigable waterway. It is, however, an extremely picturesque channel.

We strolled through the city - shopping as we went. Nazy found a Rubber Duck to add to her collection. (I’m not making this up.) And we got matching fedoras. (Matching in the sense of shape and style; not matching in the sense of color. Mine is White; Nazy’s is pink. Regular readers will recall that I have an extremely nice white felt fedora. In contrast, the Colmar model is labeled as 100% Paper.

That evening we went to the La Maison des Têtes Restaurant. The food was magnificent and the venue spectacular. The building was constructed in the 17th century.

“This has been a wonderful Father’s Day.” I gushed to Nazy when we returned to the hotel.

“It was a little late.”

“Of course. But why mess with tradition...” I noticed a chill forming. “...eh, why mess with a winning formula?”

We had more to see, but there is an unbroken rule when it comes to The Weekly Letter: Three pages marks completion. So, the French Expedition will be continued...



Take Care and Cheers,