

THE MARTIN FAMILY

FLORAL FORTITUDE

SWITZERLAND

June 26, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are happy, healthy and on the way to overwhelming prosperity. Here, the endless sunny days that marked the beginning of spring have been increasingly punctuated by showers. The rain, which is necessary for flowers and crops, is welcome - especially when it conveniently arrives at night. Nazy's father - **The Admiral** - liked to remind me of the importance of rain.

Memphis 1977

Nazy's parents had arrived during a thunderstorm. I began to apologize for the weather, but I was interrupted by Nazy's Dad.

"This rain, Dan, is what makes America rich and powerful. In our country (Iran) rain is more valuable than gold...."

"But not quite as valuable as oil," I thought.

"... and it makes your land fertile and green."

It was still raining three days later. At least 4 inches of rain had fallen daily since Nazy's parents had arrived. The Mississippi River was rising and many streets were flooded.

"There is a lot of rain in Memphis, Dan." Nazy's Dad observed.

"Do ya' think so?" I thought as I rowed down the driveway to the mailbox.

On Friday, it was still raining. Nazy's parents were scheduled to fly to Washington.

"There is too much rain in Memphis," Nazy's Dad observed. I was too busy to respond: I was bailing water and working the rudder.

Present Day

I was making cuttings from the 'at risk' flora on the family balcony and terrace. Nazy, unimpressed, was shouting advice.

"Cut something that's yellow and sickly. We need samples for the gardener. Aargh! No! That was the only green branch."

We took the cuttings to Maier, a gigantic flower nursery. Nazy wanted expert advice about several Martin Family cultivation anomalies: The boxwood had bugs, the evergreen topiary had turned brown, the herb garden was attracting fruit flies, the winter-hardy hedge, had turned yellow during the winter. Finally, one newly planted geranium, unlike its peers, had not only failed to bloom, it had decided to shrivel.

Wolfgang, Maier's expert, had answers for everything. The topiary needed more water in the summer, but we over-watered in the winter. The hedge needed less water in the summer - but we hadn't given it enough water in the winter. The boxwood needed bug spray.

"Wolfgang also suggested bug spray for herb-loving fruit flies," Nazy explained.

"I won't eat spayed herbs."

"Sprayed. And Wolfgang said that you over-watered the geranium."



Sickly Geranium

"The geranium is a sickly, genetically-impaired, substandard, inadequate, pathetic example of a glorious flower. If it drank too much, that's its problem. Not my problem! I know exactly what we should do," I said, grabbing a hedge clipper and a garbage bag.

"Dan!"

"You must be ruthless with your plants." I said as I tossed the herbs into the bag and, sporting an evil grin, turned to the offensive and offending geranium.

We like flowers and they have been a part of each residence enjoyed by The Martin Family. In Memphis, after a four year growth phase, our peach tree finally sported an actual peach. Enthralled, we made daily status checks. We were about two days from harvest when, while we were watching from the kitchen window, a raven picked the peach. I rushed outside and threw a tennis ball at the raven. (I missed; the raven, thoroughly amused, thought about returning the ball.) We moved to Vancouver shortly thereafter - never tasting a personally cultivated peach. And, at the Ledge Road estate in Hanover:

Hanover, New Hampshire
1987

In my opinion the flowers blooming in the shaded rock garden looked great. Nazy's father wasn't so sure. He wanted improvements. He was waiting when I returned from work.

"There are rocks in you garden, Dan."

"Of course. It's a rock garden." I replied. I saw a nearby pile of small rocks.

"I removed those rocks, Dan, but there are many more. You must dig at least one meter deep and sift the soil. Then you can replant everything."

"There is no soil one meter deep. The house is located on Ledge Road, on granite ledge, on ledge rock extruding from the mantle of the planet. If I dig six inches below the surface, I'll break the shovel." I thought. "Great idea," I said.

Years later, upon our return from The Netherlands, we planted 400 tulip bulbs in the rock garden. We needed heavy equipment, high explosives and warm coats. Expecting to replicate the Dutch gardens, we waited a long time for Spring. The bulbs began to grow. Just before they blossomed, a herd of deer bit off every single flower. I didn't have a tennis ball



Pokie and the Primrose

We also have indoor plants - like the primrose collection in The Hague (pictured with the indoor cat). Here in Zürich, Nazy is cultivating orchids and cactus.

The orchid collection is a success because:

“I know how to take care of them,” Nazy claims.

“They look good...”

“I water them, I prune them and I tell you when to fertilize them.”

“I know. Do you talk to them?”

“Jawohl!”

“*Show-off*,” I thought. “Do they talk back to you?” I said.

Although Nazy wasn't amused by my question, I have seen plants that can communicate. (See photo.)

I'm not quite finished with this letter, but we're going to a movie and I must get ready..

“What do you want me to wear, Nazy?” I ask.

“Whatever you like. Just wear something nice.”

“No Problem,” I reply, “everything I have is nice.” I choose jeans and a colorful shirt. I should have known better.

“I said *nice*, Dan. *Nice!* That shirt is too big for you..

“That shirt was a present from you...”

“... and those jeans are frayed.

“Frayed is very 'in', my dear.”

You need a coat...”

“... hat and gloves?”

“Your hair is a mess. You can't do anything, can you?”

“I can hope that the movie is good.”

Take care and Cheers,

Dan



Plants communicating
FIFA: Formal Institute Floral Aggression