

# THE MARTIN FAMILY

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## SWITZERLAND

21 March 2011

Dear Darius,

I hope that you are well and happy. Here, we are enjoying (Persian) New Year. The weather is beautiful - perhaps deceptively beautiful because in the past, it has snowed in March. (In fact, it's even snowed in April.) Of course, we're not the kind of people to let historical precedent get in the way of enjoyment.

To prove the point, we have planted flowers in the terrace window boxes. Friends were...

"...astonished, Naz Why did you let Dan plant?" A neighbor asked at the elevator door.

"Dan said that they were winter-hardy plants," Nazy replied.

"Really?" The neighbor was not convinced.

"And Dan was tired of looking at the dead carcasses of last year's geraniums."

Author's Note: Nazy was also tired of the fossilized geraniums. We are, of course, tempting fate, but it does feel like **Spring**.

Last week's letter featured a lengthy description of my new (white) Ferragamo fedora. At that time, I observed that the fedora made me look like: "Justin Timberlake". Nazy was not impressed.

"Justin Timberlake? You!?"

"I meant Indiana Jones," I replied, scrambling.

"Indiana Jones would never wear a **white** fedora."

"That's not the point.."

"Isn't Harrison Ford a zillion years old?"

"No. He's my age."

[Note: A moment of silence ensued.]

"But," Nazy resumed. "The hat does make you look like one celebrity."

"Really? Who?"

"Charley Sheen."



During the last several months, I've spent most of my time at home. As a result, my hard-earned frequent flyer status has undergone slow, steady and relentless degradation. Nevertheless, although I approached a (now) unusual flight to Amsterdam with trepidation, I made no effort to change my routine:

Quite simply, I marched directly to the Business Class/Platinum Elite check-in counter. Astonishingly, I was upgraded and awarded an aisle seat (9C).

[Readers should not get excited. On this Intra-European flight, the business class/peon class demarkation is identified by a sliding curtain. The seats are exactly the same in both classes.]

The positive vibes continued, but I realize that regular readers will find the sequence of events described in the next paragraph very difficult to believe. Affidavits confirming the veracity of the descriptive text have been solicited.

**Boarding was completed early.** (All passengers were time-sensitive Swiss residents.) Accordingly, the Captain announced that we would be able to **make an early departure.** **Flights** into Amsterdam's Schiphol airport **were flowing smoothly** and our airplane was not directed to the dreaded runway 5 that is located on the outskirts of Glasgow. **We arrived early.** Shunning disembarkation at a remote gate linked to the terminal by bus, **we parked at the closest gate** on concourse B. With no checked luggage, **I was not delayed at baggage claim.** It was a warm, **sunny and beautiful day.** My **rental car was waiting** for me. **I drove** to the hotel on the **traffic-free** A4 and A10 motorways **arriving, hassle-free** to the discovery that my reservation had not been lost.

Caught off-guard (I had allocated a few hours for the normal miscues), I had time to finish my book before beginning work.

Not everything was perfect: both of my normal suppliers were devoid of Apfelflappen, a Dutch treat that I always enjoy.

Business meetings in The Netherlands went well. I had time to visit several friends. I even had time to drive to The Hague. I wanted to see our old house. I note that "warm and sunny" disappeared as soon as I set off on the A44. Nevertheless, I found a parking space directly in front of "Adele", the (former) Martin Family Estate at Badhuisweg 42.

*"Hmm," I thought. "We lived in this garage-less residence for three years and I never found a place right in front of the house."*

Note: Nazy reminded me that once, right after we obtained a special parking placard, she found a parking place directly in front of the house. She forgot to put the placard on the dashboard and the family Tarsus was booted. We had to pay a large fine.

I tried to take a photo of our old house, but fog had descended and the photo ended up looking like this [→].

Luckily, I found freshly baked Apfelflappen at the Palace Promenade on the North Sea. I drove back to Amsterdam. Later, while checking out, the clerk asked if I would be willing to spend time on a quick survey. I was about to demur when he introduced two bodacious and lithesome young ladies who were..

“... from a Dutch TV station. We’re doing a story on business visitors to The Netherlands. Is this your first time in The Netherlands?”

“Hardly,” I replied.

In the end I agreed to spend “no more than 20 minutes” on camera. Thanking me, they introduced their colleague - who was neither bodacious nor lithesome.

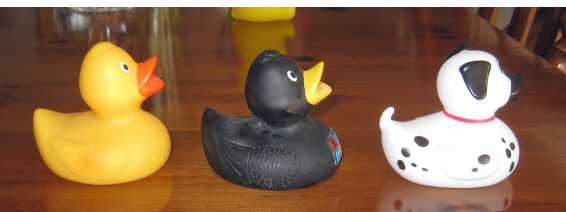
“Interesting and effective business development process you have,” I began as I watched the ladies depart. I answered a few questions and told a few stories. The “on-screen talent” said that I was a ‘great story teller’ and promised to send me an email when my segment aired. [I hope that they don’t make me look like a jerk.]

Back home, Nazy and I decided to go to the annual gardening exhibition at the Zürich convention center. The show has a gigantic collection of garden items: fountains, barbecues, gazebos, flower bulbs, jacuzzi, furniture, bonsai plants and...

“Look at this!” Nazy exclaimed. “A rubber duck collection.”

The exhibition hall was crowded with very expensive items that had to be ordered. In contrast, the rubber duck display allowed purchase of “any duck” for 5 Francs. Nazy has a collection of Rubber Ducks. (Regular readers know that she also has a thimble collection, a hat collection, a scarf collection, a belt collection, a purse collection and a shoe collection. The latter began when we acquired a portion of the Imelda Marcos estate.)

The rubber ducks were too good to pass up. But narrowing the choices was not simple. Nazy decided against the Gadhafi Duck with a scraggly mustache because it was wearing an absurd head dress and a flowing Bedouin robe. (Instead of quacking, this model was shouting.) In similar manner, Nazy eliminated the football, baseball and pilot ducks. She settled on..



“A rubber *doggie*?” I asked.

“It’s a Dalmatian Duck,” Nazy replied.

In truth it fit into our collection which includes a rubber elephant (acquired in Thailand) and a rubber frog (France?) without any problem.

And, finally, this year the vernal equinox was marked by a full moon - a full moon that occurred as the lunar/terra distance was at a minimum: The moon’s orbit is an ellipse; at minimum distance, it is 31,000 kilometers closer to the Earth. When full moon occurs at the same time, the moon will be roughly 15% bigger and 30% brighter than normal. My photo may not conclusively illustrate those facts in an exciting manner, but the March 19 full moon was spectacular from Zurich.

Take care and Love,

Dad

