

THE MARTIN FAMILY

Carmenstrasse, 48

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SWITZERLAND

March 28, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are well and happy. This exciting week for The **Swiss** Family Martin began very early Monday morning: 12:21AM to be exact. It had nothing to do with Switzerland; it was, rather, an astronomical and historical event: the vernal equinox and Persian New Year. Nazy wanted to prepare the traditional New Year's Table. Surprisingly, she asked me to help.

"I need one of your fish."

"I don't have a gold fish," I replied, aware of the tradition. "Goldfish like colder water than my tropical fish."

"We can modify the tradition..."

"Modify a tradition, Nazy? Traditions become traditions because of non-modification. Doesn't the goldfish represent a prosperous new year?"

"Dan.."

"I'll see if I can catch one of the silver fish; we can be semi-prosperous."

"The **red** ones are prettier."

"*The red ones are faster,*" I thought as I grabbed my net.

~~I ended up with~~, eh, I was only able to catch a ~~silver~~, eh, gray aquatic representative. Given the economic consequences resulting from the missing goldfish, it is critically important for us to avoid US Dollar investments. Accordingly, we decided to go to Rome.

Flashback: July 1990. The Martin Family, recently relocated to The Netherlands, had embarked on its first European vacation: we were in Rome. More specifically, we were in the (☆☆☆) Hotel Portamaggiore, a Roman establishment that conveniently showcased both ancient and modern Rome.



Ancient Rome

“There is no water pressure,” Nazy shouted.

“I know,” I replied. “The shower is connected to a 2000 year old aqueduct.”

Modern Rome

“Why is it so loud?” Nazy shouted over the cacophony bubbling up from street level.

As I crawled to the window to review the situation, I considered pulling a pillow over my ears. “*But a straw-stuffed pillow won't work very well,*” I thought. Glancing out the window, I saw scores of garbage trucks exchanging clanging dumpsters. I closed the window. The noise dulled, and the temperature climbed.



The Martin Family, Rome 1990

“Do you think they fixed it?” I asked Nazy as we were headed to the airport.

“Fixed what?”

“Rome, my dear. I was thinking about our last visit. We left Rome in ruins.”

“Dan..”

“But it was not our fault.”

Taking advantage of a gift from Melika, we booked the spectacular (★★★★★) Hotel Palazzo Manfredi next to the Colosseum. The Manfredi is a boutique hotel with only 16 rooms. We were greeted with flutes of Prosecco on the rooftop restaurant before being moved into a wonderful room.

After refreshing, Nazy and I went for a walk. We each ‘sort-of’ knew what we wanted to do.

“Italian shopping is great!” Nazy thought. *“The area near the Spanish Steps is famous for designers. I wonder if we can go there.”*

“Last time we came, I was amazed by the Pantheon,” Dan thought. *“I wonder if we can go there.”*

Weather conditions were ideal, but both of us were technologically disadvantaged.

“Who left Sybil¹ in Zürich?” I asked rhetorically. “Now we have to use this map.”

We walked around the Colosseum, past the Circus Maximus, over the Tiber and (somehow) into the vicinity of the Pantheon. We ~~passed a few shops~~, eh, we stopped in a few shops on the way. The Pantheon is the largest domed structure (made of unreinforced concrete) in the world. Built by Hadrian in 126AD, it has been in continuous use since that time and is, in my opinion, the best-preserved Roman era building. [Although generally spared by the barbarians, in the early 1600’s, Pope Urban VIII removed the bronze ceiling which was melted to construct cannonballs.] The only source of interior light is a central opening, an oculus, at the top of the dome.

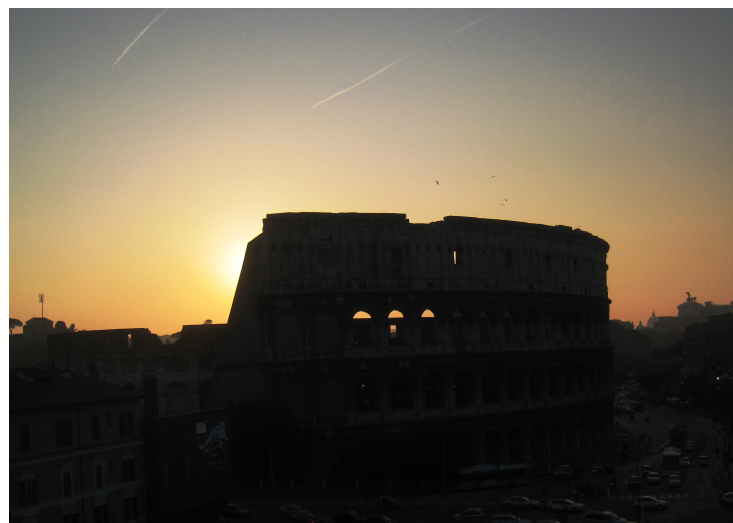
We returned to the hotel in time to watch the sunset behind the Colosseum as we enjoyed a dazzling and delightful dinner at the roof-top restaurant.

As I waited for Nazy to get ready for breakfast the next morning, I reviewed The Family Archives. Breakfast at the Portamaggiore in our 1990 trip had been :“Breakfast rolls recovered from Pompeii and hermetically sealed in compressed volcanic ash.”

“It’s lucky that I have these official archives,” I thought. *“Otherwise, I might forget, misrepresent, exaggerate or (gasp!) invent events.”*

The Manfredi’s breakfast featured fresh fruit, real juice and very tasty donuts. After that we were off to see The Pope. (This is absolutely true; details in next edition TWL.)

Take care and Cheers,



¹ Sybil: The GPS Navigation Computer in the family car.