

THE MARTIN FAMILY

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SWITZERLAND

May 9, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are well, happy and celebrating under wonderful May weather wherever you live. The news week in Europe was marked by events of epic consequence for the planet. The most important might have been...



Nazy's Wedding Hat
(and outfit)

"... **The Royal Wedding**, Dan." Nazy explained. "Everyone knows that."

"Right," I thought. "In the usual formal royal family picture, they all look like they're trying to hold in a giant fart."

"I'm going to watch it at Hotel Eden au Lac with my friends. We'll all wear hats and listen to the BBC..."

".... doing the play-by-play..." I interrupted.

"Exactly!" Nazy concluded.

The Royal Wedding must have been important: it had "high ratings". More than 2 billion people watched the nuptials. A BBC commentator described the nuptials as (I am not making this up):

"A classic middle class wedding."

"Well," I thought. "I'm not as far along in my climb through the social strata as I thought."

"Why didn't we have a horse-drawn carriage at our wedding?" Nazy asked.

"We had the equivalent of 50 horses in my Austin-Healy," I replied. "Maybe we weren't middle class then," I thought.

"What did you think of the wedding?" Nazy asked.

"The royals will surely benefit from an enriched gene pool," I replied as I watched Princess Beatrice's hat enter Westminster Abbey.

"And how would you rate **The Royal Wedding**, Dan?"

"I'd give it a 9.9 out of 10, my dear."

“What? It was beautiful. Why didn’t you give it a 10?”

“They didn’t invite me - the Baron of Baldshire.”

The Royal Wedding had competition in the important events category. I was making Iced Tea when I realized the shattering truth:

“We are out of Splenda!” I exclaimed.

[Note: Splenda™ is a, eh, is the artificial sugar substitute that I use to make “the world’s greatest ice tea”.]

“Don’t worry, Dan, I have a natural substitute.”

“You have a substitute for my substitute?”

“A **natural** substitute, Dan.”

“It can’t be good. It’s like making a copy of a copy of a ..”

“I get the point, Dan.”

“It’s called ‘Xerox degradation’, Nazy. That’s the formal scientific term.”

“Why don’t you just try it?”

“I asked Melika to send Splenda™. I sent a check. Maybe she...”

“... prefers my sweetener...” Nazy interrupted.

“... forgot about me,” I concluded.

It turned out that in the excitement of getting a new car, Melika had forgotten about the Splenda™ purchase. While I was mulling over the ramifications of this cosmic miscue, Nazy completed work on a container of ‘iced tea’.

“It tastes fine,” she explained.

“Fine?” I replied.

“You’ll like it,” she replied handing me a glass.

I drank, eh sipped carefully. “*This tastes like my aquarium smelled when we returned from Slovakia,*” I thought. “Interesting,” I said. “But it has a minuscule aftertaste. I’ll just rely on Coke Zero until Melika’s package arrives.”

“There is no aftertaste, Dan.”

“It has an aftertaste of licorice,” I insisted.

“It’s good for you.” Nazy was more insistent.



Princess Beatrice and her hat
(crew of the mothership beaming down)

"That explains why it tastes bad," I thought.

"You'll like it," Nazy continued.

"I don't put much faith in taste recommendations from someone who prefers broccoli to birthday cake," I thought. "Yes dear," I said.

Although my body eventually adapted to the taste of new 'natural' sweetener, my digestive system - especially the methane generation facility - was less adaptable. Fortunately (for both Nazy and I) the emergency shipment from California arrived this week and things are now back to normal.

Concerned readers have asked for additional information about Fiona, the family angelfish who's untimely demise was announced last week. I am always responsive:

Fiona
2006-2011
R.I.P

Hatched in a holding pond in the Florida Keys, Fiona's foolish attempt to flee was foiled when her Dad, Flavio, was captured by fiendish fugitives near the filter outlet. Fiona, ripped from familiar surroundings, was packed with fellow foolish flight risks and deported to Gabon. There, after being forced into indentured servitude, she managed to obtain asylum during a Swiss exposition of water filtration systems. She met and married Francis (from the Regal House of Gabriel) in Zurich before moving to the well-appointed aquarium at Casa Carmen. Sadly unable to procreate, Francis and Fiona reigned in blissful freedom for several years before Francis succumbed to a parasitic outbreak. After Francis passed away, Fiona exuded an aura of unhappiness that could only be alleviated by red mealworms. Ironically, Fiona's death was caused by the very filtration system that was instrumental to her Gabon escape.

And, finally, Darius has returned from a trip to Mumbai, India. I was naturally supportive of his excursion.

"I've been to Mumbai, Dar," I explained. "Believe me, you don't want to go."

"It's a chess tournament, Dad. I have to go."

It turns out that the chess tournament was on the outskirts of Mumbai. Darius' hotel was on the inskirts. The local taxi drivers, even those in 'cool taxis' (air conditioned and blue) didn't know the venue and couldn't understand Darius' pronunciation. He had to walk to a 5 star hotel for assistance. Thus, he arrived too late to register. That meant..

"I had to sightsee in Mumbai."

"That wouldn't take long," I replied.

"I had four days."

"Too bad."

Take care and cheers,

Dan