

DON RICARDO'S NEWS FROM THE HIGH RHINE... 27 MARCH 2013

27 March. Looking out on the world from my office window this morning, I could see snow on the tile rooftops and the country beyond. Edith tells me the farmers are happy we've had snow on the ground this year; she says this is what a normal winter is supposed to be like here. If that's the case, then this will be my first normal one. The last time I saw the snow stay so long was the winter of 1968-69, the year I taught school up in Michigan.

We caught a break in the weather last week, and were able to put in a couple of afternoons in our garden plot, loosening the ground and planting salad under glass cover. The snow returned, with news stories of major storms from Ireland to Moscow. Echoing Edith, my friend Hans-Ruedi Brandenberger says the earth is warm like a lover beneath the snow and ready to come alive. Not a farmer but a gardener, lately retired, Hans-Ruedi is familiar with such lore. But even the locals are saying it: Winter's over now, surely this cannot last.

We took a day trip to the Berne Historical Museum on the 17th, where we visited a marvelous exhibition of terracotta warriors from the imperial tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi (259-210 BC), the first emperor of China. A UNESCO World Heritage site, only part of this vast tomb complex has been uncovered. Over 8000 of these figures were buried. Amazingly lifelike, each has separate, individual features. Apparently there was a separate pit for government functionaries and, what I liked best, another for terracotta birds and musicians.

I turned another birthday two days later, always a sobering reminder when I think about the numbers. As I've mentioned before, maintaining balance seems to be the name of the game. I mean physical agility, of course. It tends to go away. Bike riding and walking help, plus we navigate three flights of stairs several times a day. Some people might still be climbing mountains at seventy-one, but I'm not among them.

There's mental balance too. Stay away from energy-sucking emotional swamps. Don't become angry over situations over which you have no control. "Keep on the sunny side," as in the old Carter Family song... whether the sun is shining or not. That's one mandate. The other is to cultivate love and compassion for all sentient banjos. I thought I would have come a little farther along by now. To paraphrase ex-President George H.R. Bush, I feel a lack of this wisdom thing. Wisdom may be the goal, but it may not turn out to be the destination.

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While we wait for a turn in the weather, here's a notice for our Swiss friends: We will be appearing at the Country Night Birrwil on April 6th. Be sure to come early if you'd like to see us, as we are opening the show. I'll be playing with a full band—Hans-Ruedi Brandenberger on bass, Andy Richter on drums, Peter Uehlinger on lead guitar, and our special guest, the lovely and talented Tabea Anderfuhren singing and playing rhythm guitar.

In other news my new book *The Years the Wind Blew Away*, the collected edition of *Don Ricardo's Life & Times*, is back with the editor now undergoing final steps in preparation for publishing. We are looking into putting this out in both print and e-book versions. I'm also planning an electronic edition of *Pleasures of the High Rhine*, and looking into a new edition of *The Gulf Coast Boys*, which is out of print now. I'll have more information on these projects in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I'm headed back across the water, flying to Austin on April 13th where my first gig will be a return date with author-songwriter, W.C. Jameson at Poodie's Roadhouse in Spicewood on the 22nd. I'll be mostly working on songwriting and recording projects this trip. Other dates are April 30 with Mike Blakely, and a reading at Lucky Dog Books in Dallas on May 5th, and the Old Quarter Acoustic Café in Galveston on May 24th. Please visit the homepage for details.

Happy Easter to All,
See you down the bunny trail

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