

DON RICARDO'S REPORT FROM THE HIGH RHINE... OCTOBER 2013

Foggy mornings give way to sun splashed afternoons in these waning days of October. Just a few peppers and jalapeños—and three plump aubergine we've been saving—remain in the garden, along with a few green tomatoes. A full moon come and gone, we're headed into countdown mode. I have one more band show: Saturday, the 26th at the Alabama Steakhouse, in Unterstammheim. Joined by Hans-Ruedi Brandenberger on upright bass, Peter Uehlinger on guitar and vocals, and Markus Bolli on percussion, we'll be playing songs from the new Brambus CD, *Here in the Garden*, and plenty of the old ones too. This will be our sendoff party before Edith and I leave for Texas. It's a western style venue, and I hear the food is good. Come on out and see us. Starting time is around 8:30. www.besenbar.ch

A recent hot topic on the evening talk shows comes from not from Switzerland, but from Germany, where the story broke last week of the Catholic bishop of Limburg, Franz-Peter Tebarz-van Eist who spent 31 million Euros (\$42 million) refurbishing his residence. Considering the austere and humble style of the new pope Francis, this extravagance looks particularly bad and ill-timed. Calling for his resignation, people seem to be making as much ado about this story as the pedophile scandals of recent years.

Another program we watched concerned an upcoming referendum in November in which Swiss voters will decide on three propositions: One, a proposal to allow an income tax deduction for a spouse who stays at home with young children, is expected to pass. A second proposal calls for raising the yearly cost of the Autobahn sticker from 40 to 100 Swiss Francs. Edith tells me chances look good for this proposal as well. A third, the One-to-twelve Initiative, calls for a law in which a company CEO would be forbidden a salary worth more than twelve-times the pay of the lowest paid worker in the firm. She says chances don't look good for this one. On the face of it, the idea makes sense. How much more compensation should the boss be entitled to? But such a law might dissuade business investment, and even if passed, my bet is the Masters of the Universe will find a way around it.

Held several times a year, referendums play an important role in Switzerland, where a few years ago voters overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to even *discuss* joining the European Union. (With the exception of Norway, citizens of other European countries were not given a voice in the decision to join the EU. Like the Swiss, the Norwegians voted against joining). I don't know if American readers would find this interesting, but I think it's worth pointing out as an example of how the democratic process works here.

I depend on Edith as my source of local news. Most of the conversation on these programs sails over my head as a kind of background noise while I'm reading, or playing guitar. Tragic and ongoing are the stories from Italy and Spain, where hundreds of would be immigrants have drowned coming from Africa in leaky, overcrowded boats. Desperate people will risk travel, whatever the odds. I don't know what happens to these poor people, the ones that make it across. Immigration issues here mirror those in the USA, and you hear the same kinds of argument, pro and contra.

It couldn't last. I made a good bike ride this morning on my usual route south of town. Now a chilly rain has put an end to the series of warm afternoons. Darkness closes in early, and we wonder when we're going to have to turn our clocks back.

I've managed to keep the newsletter coming out monthly this past year. I'll try and keep my record going and put out a November issue from the road. Of course it won't be from the High Rhine, but I'll look for a way to work it in. My first show in Texas will be with old amigo, songwriter George Ensle on November 4th, at Poodie's Road House, Spicewood, 6PM. www.poodies.net . Please check the website for other dates. So long for now, hope to see you down the trail.

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www.richard-j-dobson.ch

New CD, *Here in the Garden*; www.brambus.com
Books and CD's, USA www.mytexasmusic.com