

November 1971 – She Said Yes!

As much as our work schedules allowed, Margaret McKenzie and I spent even more time together in the month of November. It got to the point that I could not picture life without Margaret as part of it, neither could I imagine a more suitable life partner. I shared my thoughts about Margaret with my parents: "One of the most important things to be settled (soon, I hope) is whether Margaret will be included in future plans. Never thought I'd see the day come when I was seriously considering marriage. 'Lo, how the mighty have fallen!'"

Somewhere in the middle of November (neither of us can remember exactly when), I proposed to Margaret. It wasn't exactly a Hallmark moment. I didn't have the money for a ring. I just asked her to marry me, and she said Yes! I was a happy man for about a week until Margaret started getting cold feet and said that she needed more time to think about the momentous step of marriage. I was very upset. Suave guy that I was, I gave her an ultimatum. She had a week to come to a decision. If she decided not to marry me, our relationship would be at an end and we would go our separate ways.

I will let her tell you what she was going through during that week.

"Well, no one had ever given me quite such an unequivocal choice! I was absolutely convinced that, with few exceptions, marriage was a lifetime commitment. There was so much divorce among my friends' parents. My father had gone through a very unpleasant divorce. The pain and hardship divorce causes made me need to really sort things out. So, what did I know about

Paul? He was a pursuer of truth. He kept his word. His faith was the real deal as evidenced by a changed life. He was tenderhearted (except toward cats). He loved music and was a gifted recorder and French Horn player. He appreciated art even though he couldn't draw. He was kind and merciful toward others. He thought I was the 'bees knees' and 'got' my weird sense of humor. He was adventurous. Perhaps this was what really tipped me over the edge! I considered all the interesting things he had done, the cool (and scary!) places he'd been. The thought of him going away without me and doing more interesting things was simply inconceivable! Even though he was mad at me, his pride hurting, the week was a gracious gift. I thanked him sincerely and said, 'OK! Let's do this!'"

Now that our wedding was back on, we moved into high gear. If at all possible, we wanted Fran Schaeffer to perform the wedding ceremony and Udo Middelmann to give the message. I was also hoping that my good friend, Bruce, could serve as my best man. Given the Schaeffers' speaking schedules, we agreed on some time between Christmas and New Year's. The venue was not an issue; it would be held in the L'Abri chapel. The most pressing issues were the legal requirements that needed to be met before we could be married in Switzerland.

We were both legal residents of Switzerland at the time, so that was no problem. The first step was to visit the US Embassy in Bern, where we each executed an affidavit before a U.S. consular officer, in which we stated under oath that we were both legally free to marry. The next step was to present those affidavits to the civil registrar in Villars and announce our intention to marry. Next, the civil registrar had to publish the banns (our intent to marry) so that anyone could object if they knew any reason we should not marry. Then we would be able to have a civil ceremony and, finally, the church wedding. That all needed to be accomplished in the

space of about 5 weeks!



Life did not come to a halt at L'Abri just because we were getting married at the end of December. L'Abri acquired a new chalet in Chesières, a village between Huemoz and Villars. The chalet was named Gentiana after the lovely blue alpine flower found throughout Switzerland (not to be confused with the edelweiss, a flower that figures heavily in *The Sound of Music*). The chalet was an old pension (guest house). Udo and Debbie would move from Sapins (in Huemoz) to Gentiana with all of the workers and students living with them at the time. As the only worker with any electrical background, I was put to work almost immediately on the chalet's antiquated electrical wiring. Once we moved into Gentiana, I had a single room, pine paneled with a small sink and a balcony looking out on the Swiss Alps. Sweet! One of the balconies in the picture of the back of Gentiana was the one I was able to step out onto for a view of the Dents du Midi.



In the next post, I will ask Margaret to share the unfolding plans for our wedding. For some unknown reason, I wasn't consulted on things like the type of fabric for Margaret's wedding dress. Oh, there was one more item to attend to—wedding rings. Fortunately, there was a jeweler just down the mountain in Aigle who was also a believer in Christ. We arranged for simple gold bands to be engraved with our names and the date of our marriage—once we knew it for sure.