

Preparing for the Big Day

As I mentioned in my last post, once Margaret and I made the decision to marry, we had to go into high gear to complete all the legal requirements to marry in Switzerland. One of our first steps was a trip to the US Embassy in Bern. Because of the amazing post bus and train system in Switzerland, this was just a day's outing for Margaret and me. We had to appear before a consular official and swear under oath that neither of us were currently married to someone else. We were given the documents that we would in turn present to the Swiss officials in Villars, starting the clock for the remaining legal requirements.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 CONSULAR CASH RECEIPT
 AND
 RECORD OF FEES No. **B0691776**

1 - NAME (FAMILY, FIRST, MIDDLE) — PRINT. DO NOT WRITE MC KENZIE Margaret Cleaver			
2 - VISA SYMBOL OR TYPE OF SERVICE adm. oath			
3 - COLLECTIONS		4 - NATIONALITY	
TARIFF ITEM NUMBER (A)	AMOUNT		5 - FOREIGN SERVICE POST Ben
	US CUR. (B)	FC EQUIV. (C)	
45		STR. 10.-	6 - DATE Dec 6, 1971
			7 - RECEIVED BY (SIG.)
			8 - SERVICE PERFORMED BY (INIT.)

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ORIGINAL - APPLICANT'S COPY

3

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 CONSULAR CASH RECEIPT
 AND
 RECORD OF FEES No. **B0691777**

1 - NAME (FAMILY, FIRST, MIDDLE) — PRINT. DO NOT WRITE MATTIN Paul Rees			
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3 - COLLECTIONS		4 - NATIONALITY	
TARIFF ITEM NUMBER (A)	AMOUNT		5 - FOREIGN SERVICE POST Ben
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In addition to all the legal steps we needed to take to marry by the end of December, there were many practical details to arrange. I was going to be wearing a "Swiss style" wedding shirt made of fine wool, sewn by a local seamstress. Margaret will share about plans for her wedding dress. There will be pictures of our wedding attire in my next post. "So, the idea of a wedding dress was overwhelming! What style? What could I

afford? Where would I procure such a garment? Fortunately, there were several women who had no trouble at all giving good advice, which I was fervently grateful to receive. Dear Barb Boles not only suggested a style (very simple) and material, she went with me to purchase the yard goods AND volunteered to sew it all up! We chose a lovely fine ivory wool and green and gold embroidered trim. The sartorial splendor came together wonderfully thanks to loving hearts and willing hands!"

Another important part of our preparation was to make transatlantic calls to our respective parents, a process which was more complicated then than it is today. The reactions were vastly different. My parents were quite pleased, even though they were not going to be able to attend the wedding. They were delighted that I was going to be marrying a Christian woman. When Margaret called, her dad was not at home. Her mother kept saying things like, "What will I tell your father?" It is true that I was not a great catch. I was a college dropout, ex-hippie and ex-druggie.

In a letter introducing herself to my parents, Margaret wrote this. "First of all my parents were taken aback and not a little dismayed to find I was really serious about marrying Paul. As an only child, they had many plans and dreams for me to fulfill. Sadly for them, I have pursued none of their goals nor fulfilled any of their plans. Then for me to announce plans to marry was really the final blow. My ancient and dear mother sounded, over the phone, as if she were saying last farewells to a young and beautiful wench about to take the veil. Hardly the case!"

We knew from previous L'Abri weddings (including the one I had been part of) that Edith Schaeffer simply adored weddings. Once we announced our intention to marry and had zeroed in on

a tentative date of December 30, she (with her daughter Debbie) went into high gear. She started running around like a mother hen as she planned the most beautiful wedding that our meagre budget could afford. Fran and Edith also announced that their wedding gift to us would be a few nights in an elegant Swiss hotel in the valley—actually St. Christophe in Bex (where we had gone to the restaurant on our first real date). A truly generous gift!



Winter came to Switzerland with a vengeance. We received about three feet of snow over the course of a couple days. If our little corner of Switzerland was a picture postcard in spring, summer and fall, it was over the top now. For a time, the main road from Villars down to the Rhone valley was closed due to the heavy snowfall. I decided to visit a friend from L'Abri who was in the hospital in Aigle. I borrowed a sled and had

the ride of my life, descending about 3,000 feet in altitude over the course of six miles. I had to be careful about picking up too much speed because of the hairpin turns on the way down. I arrived at the hospital and propped my sled to the side of the front entrance. I got inside and asked for the room number of my friend. The woman at the desk gave me the room number but then asked me to please move my "voiture" (vehicle) from the entrance! After my visit, I got a ride up the newly plowed road on a post bus, which had a rack on the back for skis and sleds.