



A Soviet commissar of the Province of Kiev (right), in the Ukraine performs a wedding ceremony in the Palace of Weddings.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS

The orange blossom has been a bridal flower since ancient times. The goddess Juno gave Jupiter a "golden apple" on their wedding day — some say the golden apple was an orange, thus its blossom became associated with happiness in marriage.

ORIENTAL CUSTOM

Why do we throw shoes after the bride? Probably it dates from the ancient Middle East, where men would exchange their sandals to symbolize the exchange of property. So shoes signify transfer of authority from the bride's father to her husband.

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The Soviet Way In Weddings

BY JOAN M. SMITH

"And they lived happily ever after" is the universal wish for a Cinderella ending to every wedding, even in the Soviet Union.

Russian weddings are not huge financial liabilities because they are smaller and simpler affairs than their Western counterparts. These factors, however, do not detract from their beauty. Soviet weddings though void of religious significance contain all the sentimental emotions found wherever two people decide to marry.

Previous ideas about Russian weddings had been skeptical. Certainly a system as politically and socially rigid as that of the USSR wouldn't involve itself with the sentimentality of a common occurrence like a wedding. It was a pleasant surprise upon attending two Ukraine marriage ceremonies to find that just the opposite was true.

At first glance, the Kiev Wedding Palace is another drab reminder of Russian contemporary architecture. Its interior, however, is one of warmth, comfort and modern elegance. The downstairs high-ceilinged waiting room is of white marble with oriental carpets accenting the lovely parquet floors. A grand staircase gracefully curves to the upper wedding chambers where the brief ceremony is conducted by a commissar.

The wedding parties arrive in taxis and are greeted by attendants in formal gowns. There is the typical atmosphere of nervousness, the chatter of well-wishers and an overall air of festivity. The excited bridal couple along with family and friends, numbering from 10-40 people, are escorted to the upper balcony where the couple begin the ceremony by lighting their bridal candle from the eternal flame commemorating Russia's war dead.

After this ritual, everyone is ushered into the official wedding chamber with its white carved marble walls that are a striking backdrop for the brilliant red Soviet and Ukraine flags. A folk choir attired in their traditional red, white and blue peasant outfits assemble to sing wedding songs.

On a raised platform behind an elegantly curved desk waits the district commissar who is a pleasant surprise. Commissar is a word which conjures images of stern, intimidating officials. In this instance the government representative is a charmingly regal young woman. Though she conducts numerous weddings throughout the week she treats each one with a warm personal friendliness.

According to Russian guides, the bride and groom may choose what national customs they wish incorporated into the ceremony. In the first service the bride's mother, after the marriage, lightly tapped her daughter's head

with the traditional Russian decorated wedding bread. During the next ceremony the bridegroom, after drinking the ceremonial vodka, swiftly dashed the crystal goblet to the floor.

The wedding is followed by tears, hugs, kisses and congratulations. Then it's onto the festivities which may be held in a hotel's private banquet room or at tables reserved for the occasion where the party takes advantage of the available dance music.

Walt Whitman once declared "Simplicity is the glory of expression." Russian weddings in their simplicity do express a quiet dignity.

Bits On Packing

After the excitement of your wedding day, you'll be off for your honeymoon. Whether it's a big trip or a small one, you'll save a lot of bother if you plan your packing carefully. Here are some hints:

— Pack shoes, hair dryers, clocks, and other heavy things at the hinge side of your suitcase — they'll be on the bottom when you carry it, so they won't crush your clothes.

— Pack firmly. Loosely packed clothes will shift around in transit and wrinkle more easily.

— Pack in sections and not in layers — sportswear together, evening wear together, lingerie together. It's easier to get at things that way and easier to repack firmly.

— Distribute weight evenly on both sides of your suitcase (pack one heavy article at either end of the hinge), and it will be easier to carry.

— Fasten all buttons and zippers, then fold everything in thirds lengthwise — a lengthwise fold will come out naturally as you wear the garment.

— Pack all liquids (shampoo, cosmetics) and aerosols in separate carry-on case.

— Take clothes that don't wrinkle easily.

— Because you'll be trying to save as much space as possible, take clothes and accessories that you can mix and match.

Who Will Rule

The "old country" boasted many surprisingly liberated customs related to courtship, weddings and honeymoons.

Years ago in old Germany, when the hands of the bride and groom were solemnly joined by the priest, a struggle traditionally ensued for who "would have the upper hand!" The hand that ended up on top would rule the roost.

In the 1800's a similar wedding ceremony tradition was the custom in France. As the groom attempted to put the ring on her finger, the bride struggled to keep the ring from going past her knuckle. If she succeeded, it meant that she would be boss.

From the north of France came the custom involving a 30-foot leap by the bride, from a cliff, into the arms of her waiting groom. Should the bride suffer the least injury on landing the honeymoon was over.

These are traditions that were the roots of our emancipated brides of today — customs Grandpa forgot to confide in us.



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