

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch The News

November 2011 RFNL 249

Kevin & Nicole

Married September 26, 2011





Sophia "Edith" Merica
1946

A Tale of Two Brides-to-Be

It is early 1946 and Frank Riel Jr. had recently asked Sophia "Edith" Merica to be his bride. While Edith said yes, her father was not as eager to have his youngest child so far away. At first he refused, but seeing her sadness, he relented and agreed to send Edith to study in America with the agreement that if she still wanted to be married after a year or two of study, he would re-

Fast forward to 2010, Kevin Riel, the first grandchild of Frank and Edith had just turned 32 years old in April and his girlfriend Nicole Schwander was about to celebrate her birthday on the 4th of September. Kevin the hopeless romantic decides to propose on the eve of her birthday and she accepts.



Nicole Schwander
2011

They ultimately decided to be married the following year in Scotland. Kevin's mother, Jan, has family roots in Scotland, and then they could honeymoon in Germany which is Nicole's ancestral home. Ed and Jan were thrilled as while they traveled with Kevin in Scotland, it would also be the perfect opportunity for the whole family to travel together.

Kevin and Nicole hire a wedding planner to help make all the arrangements for the wedding. The venue was a the Castle that towers over the city of Edinburgh, in Scotland. Arrangements were made, dinners planned, guests were invited and the honeymoon in Germany and Europe was mapped out.

Finally, September rolls around and it's time for Kevin, Nicole, Jan, Ed and the rest of the family, friends and guests to head out to Scotland. Kevin and Nicole arrive first and make their way through customs. The custom agent asked them, "What is the purpose of your visit? With a great deal of anticipation, they say "We're here to get married!" (Uh, Oh, where have we heard that one before?)

Much to their disappointment, they discovered that their wedding planner (who specializes in Scottish Weddings) was wrong. U.S. citizens DO need a marriage visa when entering the UK to be married. Without this visa, they were pulled from the line and sent to the detention area where they hoped that things could be worked out.

After three hours of interrogations, alone and together, the UK government denied their entry, kept their passports and forced them to buy plane tickets to New York. From New York they filled for the visa and after 30 pages of documents, over a \$1000 in fees, and 3 days of time, the British Government decided not to allow them into the county. All the plans for a Scottish wedding vanished while the family and guests tried to celebrate the union without the bride and groom being there. Eventually, their passports were returned and while barred from Britain, they could go on their honeymoon in Germany where they celebrated their wedding day together.

They say history repeats itself and this is certainly the case here. So... Kevin, Nicole, it looks like you have been preordained to follow in Frank and Edith's path. This of course means your future holds for you: lots of loving children, even more grand children, long life and a marriage that will last you both forever. Not a bad path at all!

lent. This decision also meant that Edith would have to leave her family and move to America.

Keep in mind that moving to a foreign country for the rest of your life was a larger decision than it is today. Back in 1946 the best way across the Atlantic was by passenger ship, a journey that took about 2 weeks depending on the route. There would be no telephone calls, email, or skypeing. Communication would be limited to letters and telegrams.

So it was agreed that Edith would go to America as a student, live in dorms and attend classes at Dubuque University, in Iowa, while Frank was at Purdue University in Indiana. Her father arranged everything, including her student visa and passage on the SS Vulcania from Alexandria, Egypt to New York City, USA. She packed up her belongings and some cash and boarded the ship during the second week of May, 1946.

Arriving on May 26, 1946 she was processed through US Customs and where she was interviewed as to the purpose of her visit. Now, she knew that she was traveling on a student visa and she should have said that she was coming to America to study and that she should not say anything about getting married. But when she was asked to put her hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth, she told the immigration officer that she was going to school but the real reason she was here was to follow her heart and get married to her wonderful fiancé Frank.

Well that one little comment earned her a notation on the manifest as "arrested" and a stay at Ellis Island while telegrams were exchanged to validate her student status and immigration papers were worked out. Had she just stated that she was here to go to school she would be well on her way to the university dorms and the start of her new life. Instead she was a guest of America for a few days of detention, much to the consternation of Frank. However, things all worked out and within five months they were married (so much for the year or two.)

Message from Kevin and Nicole



by the thought: There are a lot of people who have incredible weddings and terrible marriages; so we've had a lousy wedding...we'll make up for it with an incredible marriage. Not bad.

What some of you may not know is what happened after the wedding was cancelled. Here's a quick rundown:

Our expediter in New York told us there was some risk in flying back to Europe since we'd been denied by the UK, but because we already had a lot of money tied up in European flights, apartments, etc., we decided to gamble by flying into Poland. It worked: Dziekuje (thanks) Polish Immigration!

From there we flew to Munich, rented a car, and drove to a suburb to stay with a friend. With no plans for a couple days, we drove to Salzburg for no other reason than it seemed like a good place to lay low and lick our wounds after a week of frustration and four time zones.

While there, we decided it would be a shame to let the day we had scheduled for our wedding go by without doing something, so we resolved to have our own private ceremo-

Hey family,

Big thanks to Uncle Robert for the previous story. Indeed, the family curse does seem to portend well for us. In fact, whenever we were feeling down on our trip, we were buoyed





ny and take pictures. Where? How? With what photographer? And because I'd left all my nice clothes in Munich, what would I wear that wasn't a T-shirt? More importantly, how would we figure this all out by the next day?

We had no good answers to these questions, but as there happened to be a large festival going on in Salzburg, we intuited that everything would work itself out after a visit to the festival's beer tent. Funny thing, intuition.

After a few liters and an hour of live polka, we struck up a conversation with the 30-something Austrian couple sitting next to us. After a couple more liters, we were best friends, therefore told them of our plight.

With amazement, we watched as they pulled out a pen and paper and planned the entire impromptu wedding for us. The woman's sister was a photographer and would take the pictures. There were three locations that would be perfect for the ceremony and photos. And before that, she would take us to get traditional Austrian formal wear. 'If not a kilt, why not lederhosen?' I thought. 'At the very least, I'll always have a good Halloween costume.'



Everything went off without a hitch. Obviously, this is more than we can say for the wedding planner who we gave thousands of dollars to. Our Austrian pals wanted nothing, saying over and over how “lucky” they felt to help out.

A tree stump in the woods was our alter. Over it, we said our vows, exchanged rings, and I kissed my beautiful bride. Later, we had an amazing dinner at a restaurant they chose for us and made more friends.

It was a pretty incredible day made possible by some pretty incredible people we hadn't even known 24 hours.

This was our wedding. Any subsequent signing of legal paperwork at a yet-to-be-determined courthouse will be about as significant to us as the consequent signing of tax forms we'll now jointly file.

The rest of the trip went smoothly and we had an absolutely amazing time, even though the first week was pretty horrendous.

If we ever thought we had any reason to feel sorry for ourselves, however, all the support and love we've received from you – our friends and family – makes it clear that we are extraordinarily lucky people. We are eternally grateful for it.

We especially thank Aunt Margaret, Uncle Bud, Aunt Francie, and Lyle for making the trip and the most of it; Brett for showing us a good time in New York when we needed it; Jessica and Miguel for sharing their wisdom on Italy over some rad Italian food (not to mention the ride to the airport), and everyone else who provided us counsel and good vibes...and of course our bros, sises, and parents for being the coolest dudes and dudettes on the planet.

Here are some pictures of the ceremony, and you can see pictures from our honeymoon on Facebook.

Much love,
Kevin and Nicole



Grandpa Suffers Stroke, On the Road To Recovery

On November 7, Grandpa Frank had just finished up a very productive day that included 18 holes of golf at Admiral Bakers GC and writing a few articles



Because Grandma had reacted so quickly (in fact, the doctors say she probably saved his life) they were able to treat Grandpa with the blood thinning drug TPA. It truly is a miracle drug because when Grandpa was brought in he was semi-responsive, could not speak and had no control over his body. Within a few hours he could move most of his extremities and had begun to speak again.

As of this writing Grandpa Frank has made big strides in his road to recovery.

for the RFNL. At 9:00pm he emailed Robert the pictures and got ready for bed. As usual he kissed Grandma good night and then walked to the other side of the bed to get in. Unfortunately he didn't get that far. Grandma, alerted by the fact he didn't get in bed, found him crumpled on the floor. When she wasn't able to get him up, and



frightened by the fact that he could not speak, called for help. An ambulance arrived and paramedics quickly transported Grandpa to Sharps Memorial where they determined he had experienced a serious stroke.



After spending three days in the ICU ward he was transferred to the rehab center on Sharp's campus in Kearny Mesa. He has started to regain some of his memories and even recognizes family members again. He has regained most of his physi-



cal capabilities, although in a weakened state, and will require a lot of physical therapy to bring them back to normal.

The MRI of his brain has revealed only minimal damage in two locations, both localized in an area on the left side that ef-



fects speech and the thought process. This has made it very difficult for Grandpa to communicate on some subjects. Interestingly enough, he can add and subtract as fast as a calculator, but his abilities to verbalize space, time and location are still somewhat challenged.

The healing process will take several months or more but we hope to see him home before his 93rd birthday on December 6th. We thank everyone for their kind words of support and prayers. We ask that you keep him in your prayers and provide him with words of encouragement.



Bunny Nose Department

By Bruce Hartman



As many of you know I went in for a second spine surgery on October 11th, just after Michelle's wedding. This surgery was a continuation of the first surgery done seven months ago to my lower back. This time they removed the back part of the T-3, 4, 5, 6 and T-7 vertebrae (aka laminectomy) to decompress the spinal cord in my middle back area.

The surgery went very well and was completed in only 4 ½ hours. The only surprise this time was significant blood loss that required a transfusion of three units of blood from the blood bank. The surgery was on a Tuesday and by Friday I was doing well enough to go home, albeit very tender.

Saturday evening I was feeling pretty lousy and went to bed around 6:00PM. By 10:00PM I was burning up with a fever so we called the 24 hour nurses triage line for advice. The nurse spoke with the on-call physician and told me to take some Tylenol and "keep an eye on things." The Tylenol did help drop the fever from 103 down to 99 so I got some sleep. Sunday I felt crappy all day and around the same time as the previous night I started to shiver and run a signifi-

cant fever. This time we didn't bother to call I just took some Tylenol and made it through the night.

I called my primary doctor the next morning (Monday) and they got me in right away. We spent about five minutes with the primary doc and were told to go to the emergency room immediately. Once at emergency I was admitted back into the hospital. It turns out I was pretty sick. After a lot of testing it was determined that I had a severe blood infection (sepsis), a urinary tract infection likely from the catheter, a deep vein thrombosis DVT (blood clot) in my left lower leg, acute shortness of breath from pneumonia and a pulmonary embolism (blood clot in the lung). The "take a couple Tylenol" advice was not exactly the best advice they could have given as it turns out. The chemo drugs that I take to weaken my immune system to slow the muscle disease made me ripe for infections to run wild... sort of the perfect storm scenario.

I stayed in the hospital for several days with non-stop IV antibiotics, clot dissolvers and blood thinners flowing into my veins and with the addition of one more blood transfusion I began to feel quite a bit better. On Thursday afternoon they let me come home to pick up where I left off with the recovery process from the back surgery.

A nurse has come to the house every day this past week to pull blood for the lab while they continue to monitor the infections and tweak the blood thinner medications. I am feeling much better now and am just finding ways to get comfortable and get through the long days of daytime TV. The back is on the mend and I am walking some and able to tolerate standing for a few minutes at a time. Another week or so and I should be past the worst of it and look forward to being without pain in the near future!

In January I have another surgery scheduled to cut out some of the skull behind both eyes (orbital decompression). The disease is pushing my eyeballs out so they need to make some room for the thickened muscles before my optic nerves are toast and to make my eyelids work better. I had this done back in 1995 to my left eye but they didn't cut enough out for as active as the disease has become. I remember it being quite uncomfortable so I am not looking forward to this next one since they are going to do both eyes at the same time...OUCH! I hope they wash their hands before this next surgery... I really don't want any more infections! I guess I'm fortunate that they can just keep cutting stuff off to get a few more miles out of this old wreck... sort of like a demolition derby car. When parts are broken or hanging they just cut 'em off and throw 'em away. I told Birdy to drop me off at the glue factory but she wants to keep me around a little longer... go figure!



FAMILY SHORTS

Here are some pictures of various family members in their Halloween costumes. Unfortunately, we don't have pictures from everyone but these are fairly representative of the Riel Family. Benny was the subject of a costume contest between Jessica and Miguel. Can you guess which one was selected by Miguel?



Of course we have "Super Holden" and "Batman" Corbin or how could we miss that little Tootsie Pop Liam? Nathan was particularly clever and Annie as cute as ever. Carol as a Dalmatian!!!! Is that really Bud, and just what exactly are the coworkers of Robert made up to be?



As the newest member of the Riel Bald Headed club, Bruce wants to remind everyone of a few important dates. Or to put it another way...

"Be there or be Bald!"

Thanksgiving Day, Party at Bud and Margaret's House

Riel Bowl XXI December 28, 2011 at Carol and Jeff's House