

# your wedding

## Bride of the Month



Suzanne Algar, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Algar of 37 Duncan Drive in Georgetown married Eric Rodgers son of Helen Rodgers and the late Carl Rodgers of Stellarton, Nova Scotia.

Portrait by Paulette

### Lapland brides can make last-minute switch

Least known among the peoples of the world are the inhabitants of Northern Finland at the Arctic Circle. It is believed that the Finnish Lapps roamed as nomads across Russia and Finland as far back as the last ice Age, 10 millenniums ago.

Their origin, actually, is not known. There is some thought that they are an ancient sub-arctic race. The Finns only know that they found the Lapps in the North of their country about 2,000 years ago.

Though time has wrought its changes among these quaint people as it has with other inhabitants throughout the world. Some of the traditions of the deep past are still retained by the quiet, shy Laplanders. Among these are the customs that continue to be practiced at Lapp weddings, both by bride and groom.

Unlike the nuptial event in America, where both parties participating in a marriage arrive at the church separately, in Lapland the bride and groom are escorted to the house of worship on foot, in a procession from the bride's home.

Accompanying the bridal pair and first in line of march, are the bride's nearest family. The groom's relatives follow, with the betrothed couple next.

Behind them are young marrieds and the singles. The procession often consists

of several dozen people. The traditional Lapp bridal dress is always dark blue, with many shawls tied over the bride's shoulders. Usually the top one is white. Taking the place of a veil.

Women guests at the wedding ceremony wear white shawls, also as is customary on all solemn occasions. The number of shawls worn by the bride is kind of a status symbol.

Lapp custom gives the bride a chance to change her mind about her intended husband, right up to the last minute, practically, before she says "I do".

A rejected suitor may appear and approach her before the ceremony, while she is seated, sit down beside her and lightly press her foot with his. He hopes she will return the gesture. For, if she does, this will signal that

she would rather marry him.

This foot-pressing method gives the near-bride the right to switch fiancés even before the priest says his Amen.

Though this might call for smelling salts by the bride's and the groom's families and friends in America, in Lapland no one gives it a second thought. In fact, the girl's behaviour would be regarded

as something quite correct. The stunned groom, then must accept the rebuff gallantly.

Wedding receptions in Lapland have changed little over the centuries. Guests attend a party at the bride's home, at which they are offered reindeer meat and salmon sandwiches - the delicacies of the Far North - and coffee and home-made pastry.

The one ancient Lapp custom that surely would have little or no appeal even to adventurous North Americans is one that is still followed by newlyweds at the Arctic Circle. The bridal couple is required to spend their wedding night outside their hut. This isn't difficult to take in the summer, when the weather is balmy, clear and delightful. But in the winter this means the nuptial night is spent in the bare snow.

The Finnish Lapps, nevertheless, are otherwise becoming more educated and assuming the ways of the very literate and progressive Finnish people. They have adapted themselves to the modern social and economic conditions.

But like many other people in other lands, they continue to cling to some of the traditions of their forefathers. The marriage rites and its ancient customs are among those that are destined to be preserved for some time to come.

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