



*Traditional wreath being made for bridegroom, J. Rystephanuk.*

to-be, accompanied by her maid of honor would also invite guests. She would wear a rushnyk about her waist. The invitation was done with great ceremony. She would have to bow to the floor, kiss the hands of the elders, and request their presence at the wedding reception. The groom-to-be went through the same procedure when inviting his guests.

The evening before the wedding, friends and relatives gathered at the home of the bride where the traditional wreath for the head was made. Stems from the myrtle plant were used. Sometimes flowers were also woven into the wreath. The stems were tied with white ribbon (later, one blue ribbon was used in order to include "something blue"). While the wreath was made, traditional songs were sung. In some areas, a tiny wreath was made for the groom. He would wear it under his boutonniere or corsage. These wreaths would then be placed on a loaf of bread or kolach. It was also customary to decorate a small spruce tree with ribbons and/or flowers. Traditions varied from area to area. In some areas the groom-to-be made no appearance at this ceremony. In other areas the groom was only permitted to enter if he could offer a drink to all the guests present; in others the groom's myrtle boutonniere would be made at his home with the same pomp and ceremony.



*Decorating the spruce tree, prior to Linda Slashinsky's wedding.*

The next morning, the mother and the matron of honor would take great pains in dressing the bride. When it came to placing the myrtle wreath, the father would bring in the kolach with the wreath. With great solemnity, the mother would remove the wreath and place it on the bride's head. The veil would be placed over the wreath.

The bride would then proceed to ask for her parents' blessing. If grandparents were present they were also included and in some instances the matchmaker and the matron of honor were included. This was done with great ceremony. The father would hold the kolach while the bride asked for his blessing. She would do so by kneeling on a rushnyk while bowing to the floor and kissing both of his feet and then both of his hands. This would be done three times. He then would place the kolach on her head and offer his blessings. This was repeated with great reverence to each of the parents, grandparents, etc. In some areas the groom-to-be would be present and he would go through the same



*The bride (Linda Slashinsky) receiving her blessings.*

procedure. In other areas the groom would perform the ceremony in his parents' home.

The bride would then proceed outdoors accompanied by her best man and matron of honor. The mother of the bride would put on a sheepskin coat inside out (the fleece lining had to be on the outside) and using a stem of the myrtle plant she would dip it into a jar of blessed water and sprinkle the bridal party and give them her blessings. She would circle the party three times, chanting her blessings.

When the marriage ceremony had been performed at the church, the priest would place a hoostena (head kerchief) on the bride's head. He then would lead the bridal party around the tetrapod three times.

The bridal couple would then proceed to the reception. In some areas the bride would go to her home and the groom to his home for separate receptions. The groom would return in the evening to pick up his bride. This was not very easily done. He often would find the door barred and only after offering drinks and/or money would be permitted to enter and claim his bride. In some instances he would even have to bring his own musicians. This ceremony was always a very jovial occasion.

In some areas it was customary for the bride and groom to go to the reception for dinner at the home of the bride. The head table would be centered with a bridal bread (korovay) decorated with a rushnyk. Prior to sitting down to the dinner, the groom would take the decorated spruce tree and dance about the table three times to the lively and spirited music supplied generally by a fiddler and the dulcimers (cymbaly). The guests would also join in with rhythmic clapping. This was often done with a great deal of hoop-a-loo.

After dinner the guests would dance. If the weather was warm they would dance on a platform built especially for this purpose. Often a large bin would serve as the dance hall. Guests who arrived at the wedding never came empty-handed. The ladies would bring cake or a loaf of bread. Gifts of a goose, a hen, a bowl of flour, a duck, a clutch of eggs, etc., were often brought to give the bridal couple a start in their marriage.

When the bride and groom came to the reception they would be met

*Korovay made by Mrs. Kay Borys.*

