

Wedding

The actual ceremony was performed by US District Court Judge Bryant. There are no photos of the ceremony and that's par for the era. Camera didn't intrude into everything like they do now. But some one did take four photos of the bride and groom. They are embossed with the designation "Alaska Shop". Rachel ran the place then so she doubtless arranged for them. She arranged everything else for the wedding and honeymoon.



Note in the first photo the vertical marble elements that would be present in fancy buildings. The only fancy buildings in Seward at the time were the federal building where the post office was housed. There weren't even any large fancy hotels. The Van Guilder was there but I've been inside it and it didn't have a lobby this large. I like the flooring. Can't tell what it is but the pattern is a Frank Lloyd Wright sort of pattern.

On page 182 of Mary Barry's book I found this photo of the Federal Building. The white mountain is Big Bear and the dark on in front of it is Little Bear. The central door is the entry into the building. We'd take that one to get to the post office inside. It looked the same when I lived there. They may be where these photos are taken, in the lobby.



Both of them look like kids, which, of course, they were. Dad looks so serious. She had just turned 18 a month and a week before this photo was taken. Amazes me how brave she was. Also amazes me that her parents were able to let her cut loose and go that way. If one of you kids had decided at the ripe old age of 16 -which is how old Marie was when she met dad in Mercur and decided to marry him- to run off to Africa to get married I would have had a come-apart. I couldn't conceive of you doing that and would have had you involuntarily committed. No kidding, as you know. But would I have been doing the right thing? I don't know. I just don't know. But I do know that as you each become parents and wrestle with the choices of your teen age children, you'll be more able to appreciate the gift grandpa and grandma Merrell gave Marie when they allowed her to take off to the wilds of the Alaskan territory with her sister as a chaperone.

Dad shows the mild discomfort that grooms are supposed to show. He's got the high starched collar of the era and an appropriately flamboyant tie. The lapels of his jacket show that he couldn't decide whether to button the top of the three buttons. The sleeves of the jacket are a tad short so he was struggling to wear a borrowed jacket. The pants are also too long. They were rented or borrowed items to make him look appropriate for the situation.

The flowers were an extravagance. He wears a boutonniere and she wears a corsage. They appear to be roses. Roses don't bloom in Alaska in May so they had to be imported from a hothouse in Anchorage or cold storage from Seattle.

His shoes are probably borrowed. It doesn't seem likely that he'd have his own because he said that he hitch-hiked from Utah to Seattle to save money. He wouldn't have carried fancy shoes in his stuff.

The curtains hanging as the backdrop suggest a federal building. They may have hung in front of clerk's desks.



The dress was mom's own. She didn't say who made it. It's likely that Rachel helped, but it's also possible that mom made it. She was in Seward a week or so before the wedding staying with Rachel so she had time to have made it.

She struggled with her hair that day, probably doing it seven ways until she ended up with what she wears here. Her hair is obviously the same length as in the wedding announcement published in the "Vernal Express" shortly before she went to Seward.

Dad was a strange one. In 1953 when he went alone out to his dad's funeral, he also went to Naples to visit grandma and grandpa. While there, he checked on things that were stored. For reasons that I couldn't guess if I tried till I died, he made a fire and burned a wash tub full of personal history. And this dress.



This is my favorite of the set. Their expressions are more relaxed and they look like they are shyly proud. She's 18 and he's 23, out there in the wilderness.

