

## **My Best Memories of the Summer of 2009**

**Sharon Morris**

My husband, Jim, and I are members of *The Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem*, an order of chivalry that is over nine hundred years old. The Grand Priory of Canada was having their 2009 annual meeting in Calgary, Canada in May. These events are very formal.

The events of the week all lead up to Saturday's investiture; which is the knighting and installation of new members and the promotion of present members. (Jim and I are both commanders). This event takes place in church and everyone is in black tie (ladies in ball gowns and men in dress uniform or a tuxedo).

Of course I couldn't take just any gown, oh no not me...We had to FedEx (too big for the suitcase) a cosseted ball gown with multiple layers of tulle for a skirt. You had to see the two of us trying to stuff it into a box from which the dress kept trying to escape.

During the week we are transported to and from events by bus and for some reason for the investiture we had school buses? Okay I am a trooper; wearing a cape, I gather up my dress into the cape and climb on board the bus and off the bus. You had to see the explosion of dress in the seat on the bus; I really don't know how Jim sat next to me?

Upon our return to the hotel, I am trying to gracefully exit the bus when suddenly I lose my balance and my left leg goes forward, with the right leg under me as I slide down a couple of steps. Amazingly I got up (unassisted) while trying not to step on the dress, trying to find a step, and all the while not being able to see my feet or a step because of the volume of the dress. Somehow I was able to continue off the bus. Once off the bus I was trying to get myself back together, but Jim is trying to move me out of the way of others exiting the bus and move me up the driveway of the hotel and out of the way. Wouldn't you know it (never fails), suddenly out of nowhere a big gust of wind comes up and yes you guessed it, the dress is blown over my head. I was then known as the big black poof...? In the mean time Jim is somehow unaware of the wind and is trying to move me forward and at this point I am at a dead stop trying to keep the dress down, when suddenly Jim realizes what is happening and is assisting me in putting the dress back down. Of course you must understand that we are laughing our heads off the entire time which does not help matters.

FYI; In case you are wondering: I did not break anything, amazingly? Although, I did have huge black and blue marks on my left elbow and right ankle and knee which did not show for a couple of days? The dress is fine; did not rip and being black, no sign of dirt. We danced the night away to a big band orchestra and were one of the last two couples to leave the ball.

Do you really think I am finished, oh no: from Calgary we proceeded to Buffalo, New York for three graduations, a birthday, a special dinner, and a wedding.

Ah yes the wedding: Instead of caring the gift from California to Calgary to Buffalo, we thought we would get it in Buffalo. Big mistake and let me tell you why: We went to the department

store that the couple is registered at (you know there is a story coming). After going through several items and the salesperson insisting on us getting a gift card of which we could not make her understand that a gift card was not an option, we finally settle on four place settings of flatware. The sales person checks and discovers that the flatware is at the warehouse and will need to be shipped. Okay, so we proceed to give our information: "P. O. Box 1234," pause, "Beverly Hills," pause, and the sales person, "What's that, the street?" Me, apprehensively, "California?" "No, no," says the sales person, "I need a billing address." Me, "That is the billing address." Salesperson, "No we need to bill you." "But I am paying for it?" "No we have to bill you." We offered cash, check, or credit card, nothing worked. So we insisted she get a supervisor. The supervisor kept insisting on a street address so they could bill us? Why do they need to bill us when we are paying for it right then and there? Again, we offered cash, credit card, or check, of which she needed one, wouldn't you think? This was a definite comedy of errors with no way to get the gift without giving them more information than necessary (my husband is an attorney). So after over an hour of craziness we left with no gift, and the store losing the sale (apparently business must be good and I guess they haven't heard about all the financial problems around the country). But, really, who doesn't know what Beverly Hills is?

PS, back in Los Angeles, I went on line to the manufacture of the flatware and the bride and groom ended up with six place settings instead of the four, plus a candy dish (better price). I am looking forward to wearing my dress again many times, especially this holiday season. And, we are making plans to be in Quebec City for the 2010 Grand Priory of Canada's next meeting.

