

Saturday 21, January – Planning the Party

Our big task today was to start inviting people to our “Get to know the Neighbors” get together next Sunday January 29. I can hardly believe the amount of time we put into deciding how to go about inviting the other residents of the building. First we looked outside on the buzzer to call someone in the building. There are 8 buzzers including the one that buzzes our apartment (when it is working). Then we looked on the mail boxes and copied down the names - many more than are on the buzzers. Then we walked up and down the stairs and read the names on the buzzers to the various doors. Some do not have a name. There are only 4 floors and the ground floor.

Back in the apartment we went to the phone book and looked up the names and found a few telephone numbers and verified that they are at 3, rue de Montmorency.

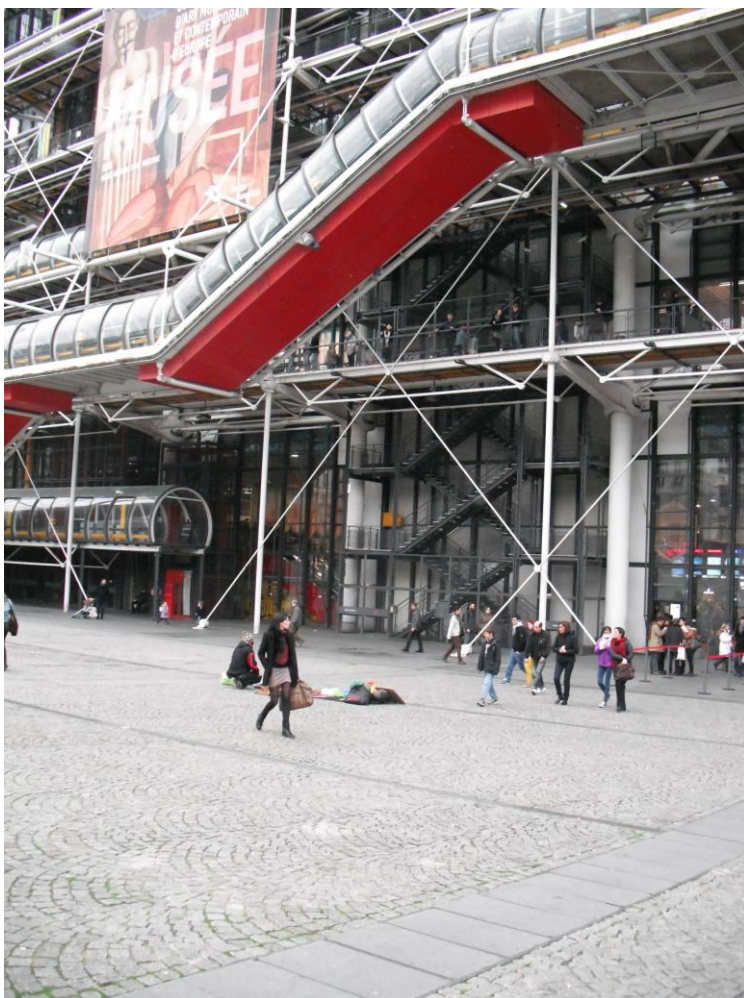
Then we put all the information we gathered into an Excel spreadsheet. The next step was to look on the Internet. We found a couple of interesting things. For one thing SARL is an acronym for a business (Société à responsabilité limitée.) That solved a mystery since a few of the boxes had SARL on them. We didn't know if that was a name, either first or last. Then we found that one of the names Altura Sarl was the name of a business and that Santos Ramirez is the owner of Altura, which is a construction company. We also learned that 3, rue de Montmorency was built in 1881.

Then we agonized over what to say on the invitation. We got advice from Gérald and then from Barbara. We ended up calling it a dîner-buffet (and in French it is an apéritif-dîatoire) and to have it from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Barbara explained to me the traditions of the people of Paris for how they spend Sundays.

We didn't have enough cards to write the invitations so we looked up papeteries (paper stores) in the third arrondissement in the phonebook and went out to find them. We didn't find anything like a Hallmark “you are invited” card. So we went to the Pompidou Center to find pretty cards with envelopes. We found some whimsical cards having to do with food and picked up 6.

After that we went to dinner at one of the restaurants around the Pompidou Center that caters to tourists so we could have dinner before the traditional dinner hour starting at 8 p.m. We had a scrumptious tomato Mozzarella and basil salad. The Mozzarella had more flavor than I associate with that cheese. The tomato was also very tasty. Then I had roast pork with fries and Ernie had veal with Brussel sprouts. We were near the kitchen and watched the waiters and kitchen staff slave away. They work really hard. I always enjoy watching the activities in a kitchen.

Back home we finally wrote out the invitations and started with Santos Ramirez, whom I met last year when he and another resident came to our apartment to inspect the leaking wall in the little study. He was home and invited us in. He remembered me and introduced us to his wife Florence Dyan. He sat us down for a drink of wine and we talked. He filled in for us who lives in the building and who is absent. He advised us to leave the invitations in the mail boxes but to knock on the apartment doors of two others. He seemed very pleased that we are having a party but commented that



it is very rare. They have a daughter who will have a 7th birthday on Tuesday and a party on Saturday. Sweet child.

Then we buzzed at the door of Mme. Favet who lives above us. She is in her 90's, rarely goes out and is nearly deaf. There was no answer - probably didn't hear the buzz. We have emailed Gérald and asked him to call her to tell her we are trying to invite her. After he tells her, we will try again and if she doesn't answer, leave the invitation in the mail box.

Another interesting thing we learned is that there is a woman named Alexandra Senes who used the 4th floor apartment as her sometimes studio and mostly as her mailing address. Check her out on her web site AlexandraSenes.com. I'm not quite sure what she does, but it is imaginative, whatever it is. Gérald said she is the daughter of Emily Senes who owns the apartment and that she is a designer in haute couture. We put an invitation in her mail box and also sent her an invitation via email.

In the morning, we will go to the vendors below us and invite them. This should be interesting. Apparently two of the three businesses are owned by Li Fu. Madina, the third one, is a wholesaler of African goods and is run by a bunch of Africans in long Muslim caftans and skull caps. We learned they are on vacation in Senegal from where they originate. The other shop owned by Li Fu is run by a Chinese man whose French is practically incomprehensible. (I talk about having a bad accent - mine is 100 times better than his and he does business!)

On top of that, our friend Christian Morel and his wife Emmanuelle will be in town from Marseille that weekend and we have invited them. With Barbara, Gerald and Sally, the other rental agent, it ought to be a lively party. The adventure begins.

January 22, Sunday – Planning the Party (continued)

I slept quite late and we didn't have much time to accomplish much. Ernie went out to buy croissants and a baguette for breakfast. He found that the bakery on Montmorency is closed on weekends but the fancy bakery on Rambuteau is open.

We did manage to gather papers for some errands we need to do on Monday. Everything is hard to do because we are moving in a fog from jet lag.

We did go out to shop in the afternoon but found all the shops closed. It is Sunday. I think they are open on Sundays only in the morning. The produce store was open so we picked up vegetables and salad stuff. There is olive oil, mustard, balsamic and wine vinegar in the kitchen, and I brought my standard herbs and spices from the storage unit so I can make salad dressing. We went to the Italian deli, also closed. So we stopped at the Asian deli and bought a leg of chicken, beef and onions dish and shrimp. We ate the chicken as our main dish for dinner and the shrimp as our first course for our first dinner in the apartment.

