

Interlude:

This part of the travelogue is out of order, because I simply must tell y'all about the wondrous experience that was the Royal wedding. I'll get back to the regular stuff, on which I'm oh-so behind, shortly. I promise. Maybe.

First off, there are Royalists and anti-Royalists here. The Royalists are fans of the more than thousand-year history of succession, albeit with the usual palace intrigue of wars, torture, murders, overnight flip-flops in the mandatory national religion, and even the offing of little children who happened to be heirs to the throne. The history of what family members did to each other over governing this place puts to shame our pathetic claims to political infighting back home, although I note that the US seems to be working on catching up to medieval standards.

In particular, Royalists are fans of the House of Windsor, the current family in line to a monarchy that seems to be nearly purely symbolic. (There remains some real power in some matters that is a little surprising to me, given that no one seems any longer to support the divine right of kings to actually govern — at least no one I've found who will admit to it).

Then there are the anti-Royalists, whose ideology descends from some guy named Oliver Cromwell, whose antics in overthrowing the King (briefly) had a thing or two to do with the eventual philosophy that sometime later led a bunch of guys in Boston to throw a party. But that's another story. Cromwell's ideology, in turn, descended from what some king had said, allegedly under duress, that was later renegotiated in a church, which was part of a school for lawyers, which had been founded by the Knights Templar. Yes, those guys from the Crusades who were formed in large part to inspire conspiracy theories about the Holy Grail and to further Tom Hanks' career. This pronouncement was eventually confirmed, however, by a later king, and became a really big deal. They call that thing the Magna Carta, which I think must mean "Big Deal," and you can see an actual original copy of the document, upon which all civil liberty for all of us is based, at the British Library

If all of this sounds like "drunk history," please know that I'm not currently drunk, but I think this country is today. Because today, the entire nation (and I understand much of the world called the "Commonwealth") dropped everything to be engrossed by the Royal wedding.

It was quite the show. I'm sure some of you saw parts, although given the time difference I doubt many of you watched it live. But it was everywhere here. For several days it led the newscasts... "Welcome to BBC News. Nuclear Armageddon threatened, but first, let's go to Reginald for the latest on whether Meghan's dad will attend the

wedding.”

People were seriously talking about this thing for weeks. When the show finally happened, it didn't disappoint. It really was sweet, with very human touches like Meghan's mom holding back tears and adorable kids and such. And the symbolism of a British Prince marrying not just an American, but an African American, with something of an activist bent, is just outstanding. Maybe useful stuff will actually come from this.

And the culture shock! The Black American Bishop Michael Curry's riffs and the looks on the faces of many of the Royals, who all seemed either stunned or bemused by the deviation from protocol, was a treat. One of the news broadcasts later showed a gathering of finely dressed British women gathered for a group showing of the wedding all belting out “Stand by Me” along with the gospel choir. It was great!

In case you were watching, you may have noted the several minute gap during which the principles and a few important family members disappeared. The time was filled by a cellist, who was extraordinary both for his music and his socks. This not being our first rodeo, having attended a certain wedding of a Brit and American not long ago, Nancy and I instantly knew what was happening. Those folks had to disappear to sign the register, required by British law to take place immediately and out of the view of any camera. So even the Royals, even when the ceremony is watched live by hundreds of millions around the world, have to follow those rules.

That's a nice concept. Even the powerful have to follow the rules. Hmmm.

Afterward, our local pub hosted a celebration in their garden. Blissfully, this was by far the nicest day since we've been here — blue skies and shirtsleeves. Woo hoo!

Nancy and two of our friends here wore “fascinators,” those silly fancy “hats” that British ladies wear askew to the finest of functions. They were alone in their millinery festivity, as it turns out. Several people were chuckling about Bishop Curry's effect on the Royals, evident on their faces when the camera caught them. People brought finger food — cheddar and onion on white bread, anyone? Nan made killer wings with a Parmesan-herb coating. Score one for the Americans.

At any rate, in this cradle of modern democracy, albeit with touches of archaic, medieval tradition well intact, politics took a holiday. All you need is love. Someone from here once said that.

Well, love and a \$43 Million wedding.

(OK, OK, so \$40 Million of that was for security... who says our Super Bowl has the

lock on the most over-the-top security costs?) So all you need is love, and an army to back you up.