

BROCK'S BANTER: Going to the Chapel

By Brock Weir

Ripped off.

That's the feeling I often had growing up as a young monarchist.

After all, I arrived on the scene in 1985, four years after the Prince of Wales walked down the aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral with Lady Diana Spencer. Although I did have some time under my belt by the time the Duke of York did the same in Westminster Abbey with Sarah Ferguson, as I was almost exactly six months old at the time, needless to say I have no recollection of it.

So, as my interest in our royal family took root, I felt like I missed the party.

This particular youngster cursed the fact he was too late to experience the real time excitement, the street parties, the in-school commemorative coins that were handed out during the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations eight years before my arrival, and all that went hand in hand with the hoopla leading up to those two ill-fated 80s weddings.

I hit something of a jackpot when I was eight or nine when I found a dusty VHS of Prince Andrew and Sarah's nuptials hidden away in the back of a cupboard labelled ?Andrew and Fergie 1986? and, as soon as it was in my hands, I wasted no time shoving it into the VCR.

But, really, it was nothing more than a second-hand thrill ? and, truth be told, by the time I found the tape, the marriage in question, as we all know, had already gone spectacularly and publicly wrong.

My time to shine, however, came in 1999.

Gearing up for my final year of Grade 8 ? that seemed like a big deal at the time ? my anticipation of high school ultimately had to take a back seat to Royal Wedding fever.

Prince Edward announced his engagement to Sophie Rhys-Jones, now the Earl and Countess of Wessex, and wasted no time going into this head long and immersing myself into every single aspect of the proceedings, collecting newspapers, reading the multitude of books about the subject, and even keeping an in-class countdown going, which really made me a hit with my classmates. (Spoiler: It did not)

Yet, at this point I didn't care. I had waited my entire 14 years for ?my? time to come, and it ultimately did ? followed in relatively short order by further Royal Visits to Canada, the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 and the subsequent Diamond Jubilee in 2012. It may have taken me 27 years, but by the time the Queen marked her 60th anniversary on the throne that year, I felt like I was finally all caught up.

Now, much of the world appears to be going through the same bout of excitement, a bout of excitement I imagine came very close to what used to be called ?the vapours,? over the Royal Wedding set to take place this Saturday at Windsor between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Over the past week or so, rarely a day has gone by without some tidbit of information coming out about the ceremony to fuel the public's imagination, from the cake details, where the bride and groom will be staying the night before the wedding, who is and who isn't on the guest list, and the kids that will come to make up the bridal party.

So much, so standard ? but this wedding seems to be anything but.

I think it's a generational thing: as interested as I am in the Royal Wedding ? and I am, really, trust me ? I find it hard to muster the same amount of enthusiasm I had for this one, and the last one between the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, as I did for the one Royal Wedding I experienced and the two previous close calls. They're my contemporaries, so maybe that lustre just isn't the same, but this is a very different royal wedding.

And it was clear ? even before the official outset ? that this was going to be a Royal Wedding not quite like any other.

Prior to the engagement itself, when Ms. Markle's name was known to few outside of her professional career and gossipy mentions about a budding relationship with Prince Harry that may or may not have been anything but speculation, any doubt was removed with a pointed message released on the Prince's behalf, addressing fevered speculation, with some of it focused around his girlfriend's African American heritage.

?His girlfriend, Meghan Markle, has been subject to a wave of abuse and harassment,? said the Kensington Palace statement dated November 8, 2016. ?Some of this has been very public ? the smear on the front page of a national newspaper, the racial undertones of comment pieces; the outright sexism and racism of social media trolls and web article comments. Some of it has been hidden from the public ? the nightly legal battles to keep defamatory stories out of papers; her mother having to struggle past photographers in order to get to her front door; the attempts of reporters and photographers to gain illegal entry to her home??

And on and on it went.

Since then, we have seen a couple continue to weather the storm of intense public scrutiny, working to strike the balance between personal and professional in their public lives, weathering storms created by unfortunate familial hangers-on, and, most importantly, turning an otherwise routine Royal Wedding ? well, as routine as far as these things can possibly be ? into a very personal affair with offshoot benefits to the people and causes that are very close to their hearts: the Children's HIV Association, the Crisis homelessness charity, the Myna Mahlia Foundation for women's empowerment in Mumbai, charities for bereaved children of servicepersons in the Armed Forces, charities that use sport to empower young people, and various causes with an environmental focus.

Over the years, Prince Harry has shown himself to have a passion and commitment for the causes closest to his heart, with no hesitation to speak out on the issues that matter to him. This same sense of commitment has been evident in Meghan Markle over the past two years, and going back even further in her own career.

Together, this seems almost like uncharted territory and I am excited to see the impact these two will have both on the Monarchy and Commonwealth, but also the world as a whole.

That, in itself, might be lustre enough.