



HEADLINES

March 18, 2011

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Are we all closet monarchists?

When I was growing up there was a common joke that in the twenty-first century there would be only five kings left in the world: Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades, and England's!

So here we are at Somersfield at the beginning of the second decade of the century and there is no question but that the luster of "royalty" still can shine rather brightly on occasion. We caught a glimpse of it last year when the Queen and Prince Philip rocketed by in their motorcade on the way to the airport and the entire school waited quite patiently along Middle Road for that brief close encounter of the Windsor kind. It was more of a celebrity sighting than a celebratory event. An interesting break in the routine of everyday school life. But yesterday, the visit of Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, to the school, was something entirely different.

There is no question but that Somersfield put on its best face. We raked, polished, painted and planned. Parents scrubbed faces and bleached shirts. And the kids, well, they were nothing short of wonderful. Our elementary students were excited and energetic while patiently waiting (the motorcade was about 20 minutes late) and both respectful and gregarious when the Prince arrived and chatted with them. Our MYP students made us all incredibly proud. Not only did they look like a million dollars, and greet our visitors with respect and enthusiasm, but they were open and chatty and keen to share in their love and pride for their school. The highlight of these student exchanges with Prince Edward was, without doubt, the almost half an hour that he spent conversing with our Silver and Bronze Duke of Edinburgh candidates. For the staff, and the parent volunteers, who were such a great help in setting up and snapping a wonderful photo-record of the visit, watching our students interact with the Prince in the Common Room was an experience not to be soon forgotten. Our kids were articulate and engaging and no-one could doubt for a minute what an outstanding group of young people they are.

So, what of all the pomp and circumstance? Well, to be honest, there wasn't much. The Earl of Wessex proved to be a charming, down to earth, very genuine individual who drove his schedule-driven "handlers" crazy because all he seemed to want to do was to spend time talking with our students.

He joked with them, probed them about their courses, their interests, their athletic pursuits, and made them, and all of us, perfectly at ease as he worked his way systematically through the student "gauntlet" that had been laid out in front of him.

Interestingly, our youngest children—the ones who had been anticipating the visit the most—were probably a tad disappointed. ("Where's his crown?" "Where's his horse?" and after he had gone upstairs, "Who was that man? When does the Prince get here?"). By contrast, our older students, had exhibited the usual teenaged feigned indifference to the visit prior to his arrival. Once he was here however, they were the most engaged and charmed. Most of them realized that they were actually speaking with someone famous on the world stage, and he was genuinely interested in what they had to say.

As a Canadian, I have always had a casual acceptance of the monarchy. The Queen represented a symbolic link to a thousand years of parliamentary traditions and, the best part was, her salary was paid by someone else! Edward's grandfather (currently lionized in the outstanding film "The King's Speech") died when I was one year old. I grew up alongside Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward (although they never once called me for a play-date) but they were always more like characters in a book than real people. But yesterday I thought, you know, it is kind of nice that there are some people in the world that are above politics, not worried about jobs and bills or where their next meal is coming from. People who can take time to speak and listen to kids and give each one the attention they so richly deserve. So thanks your Royal Highness, you really were a Prince to our students.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Car Wash

March 19th

9-Noon

MYP Curriculum Series

March 22nd

Denim Day

March 25th

Spring Break

March 26– April 10

Washington Trip MIs

April 12th—16th

Spain Trip

April 14th—24th