

Bill Rea ? World will follow George

I think we received a demonstration over the last couple of weeks when it comes to contradiction among the masses. And it's concerned the birth of Prince George.

I have heard and read lots of commentaries in the media, composed by supposedly knowledgeable people who steadfastly maintained they couldn't have cared less about the impending birth, and once the young prince was safely delivered, there were all sorts of published comments from people who were sick of the whole thing. And they wondered who really cared.

Well, I can tell you the people writing about the young prince, both before his birth and after, cared deeply.

I make my living writing, and I can tell you it's very, very difficult to write about something you don't give a damn about. You sometimes have to because it's part of the job. But when it comes to the opinion pieces (which is what this is), you are either interested in your topic or you find another subject to write about.

So I am completely prepared to admit I was interested in the anticipated royal birth. There was even a work-related concern.

You might recall that the Citizen's poll question a couple of weeks ago asked for predictions as to whether Will and Kate would be having a boy or girl. The problem was that was the active poll question at the time the baby watch started revving itself. I found myself checking news websites at just about hourly intervals, including if I happened to wake up in the middle of the night (which does happen frequently) to see if anything had developed that would require me to shut down the question in a hurry (lest we get a lot of responses from people with advanced info). I had the next question all set to go, in that event.

As things turned out, the timing of George's birth did not interfere with the question. Incidentally, 57 per cent of the people who responded to that poll predicted a girl was on the way. Only 43 per cent got it right. I would editorialize, but what's the point?

Not only did people like me, who wrote about this event, care about it, we knew many in our respective audiences cared too.

Granted, not all of you are in that group. I'm sure there have been some who saw what this piece was about, rolled their eyes, muttered something unprintable under their breath and tossed the paper aside. I might even get some snarky voice mail messages (the real obnoxious ones come in when the office is closed).

The scope of the attention paid to this royal birth was something that actually surprised me. The baby watch went on a lot longer than had been anticipated, although I think members of the Royal family themselves can take the bow for that by being coy when it came to the due date, lest the world find out when the baby was conceived (as if anybody really cared about that). Then we had the waiting game to see what the name would be. It almost reminded me of how we have to wait when a new Pope is elected to find out by what name he's to be known.

For what it's worth, my money was on George from the start, figuring his folks would act out of a certain loyal deference to the last King. I was also not surprised to see Louis as one of his middle names, obviously in memory of Lord Mountbatten, who his grandfather revered.

And it didn't stop there.

There were tons of documentaries and TV specials in the days that followed, and my wife proved quite adept at finding them.

Thus, we watched a number of programs devoted to Will and Kate and Will's family, ranging from some documentaries to at least one dramatization of how their courtship developed. Beth and I had seen that one some years ago, but given the material that was coming from some of the other programs we were watching, I was rather surprised at how accurate that spectacle was (assuming, of course, the other shows we had been watching were reliable and accurate too).

I watched these specials for the same reason everyone else did ? I find the British monarchy interesting, partly because of the history it represents, but also for the fact that it remains a going concern.

The historic significance of any such institution will always hold my interest, thus I pay attention to things like the Papacy, American Presidency, or who the Prime Ministers of Canada have been.

I have always believed there is a certain interest in history, when it comes to kings and queens, and the ones involving Britain have always been of interest to people in this culture, whether they took their first samples from the stories of King Arthur and the Round Table or revelled as kids at the fireworks set off for Victoria Day.

It is true we have gone far beyond the days when a monarch carried any real authority around here, or in England for that matter.

There was a time when a king or queen could have settled an argument in which they were engaged by having the opponent's head amputated, or making them the feature attraction at an impromptu barbecue.

People today don't have to be interested in monarchs or their families on pain of their heads. They're just interested.

And I think this feeling is pretty strong among Americans too. True, major components of American history deal with the fact that these people made a point of telling the monarchy where to go. Yet it's obvious that a lot of proverbial hatchets have been buried. All

three of these countries were on the same side in two World Wars.

I think it's interesting too that major and very successful motion pictures have been made involving three of the last six monarchs (two won Oscars and the other was nominated), and I suspect we'll see one devoted to Edward VIII one of these days.

Besides, as I have pointed out in this space several times, people in this continent have been known to wake up early to watch royal weddings or jubilee celebrations. People generally don't do that for irrelevancies.

One of the criticisms I heard a lot of the last couple of weeks is this isn't the only kid who's been born. That is true. But just about all the kids born this year are not likely to have the impact on history that this little guy promises to have. Granted, it's through what is commonly known as the "accident of birth," but it's still going to be part of reality.

And this kid is going to attract lots of attention all the days of his life, because there are people like you and I who are interested

