

Seventy years on the throne

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Poor you.?

Those are the words a young Princess Margaret reportedly said to her older sister Elizabeth when it was announced her uncle, King Edward VIII had abdicated his role as King and their father, George VI, had ascended to the throne.

The abdication placed Elizabeth as the ?their presumptive' in direct line to become the future Queen.

Even at her young age, Princess Margaret realized her older sister's life was now written for her and she would be duty bound to follow the protocols of royal tradition and be under the scrutiny of the public for just about everything she did once she assumed the role of Queen, and for the rest of her life.

Elizabeth was versed in royal protocol from a young age. When her father returned home from a small ceremony declaring him king, before his official coronation, Elizabeth curtsied, and called him ?Your Majesty.?

The Royal Family is approaching a change in its history. The Queen, Elizabeth II, is nearing the end of her reign, and some day presumably within the next ten years, if the Queen sets a new royal record, you will be seeing newly minted coins and paper money with the image of a King for the first time in over 70 years.

The Queen has been on the throne for longer than most of her subjects have even been alive.

The monarchy in modern times has always been somewhat controversial. Late last year, Barbados removed the Queen as head of state and is gearing up toward becoming a republic. Several other Caribbean countries have done so in the past and a couple more are considering it.

They feel it is necessary to cut ties with their colonial past.

Even in the United Kingdom there is a considerable percentage of the population that would like to see the monarchy abolished, considering them freeloaders who live off the public and don't have real jobs.

There's no doubt the Royal family have a disconnect when it comes to the common man.

There have been many stories about Prince Charles and others in the royal family, who have absolutely no idea of the value of a dollar, or in the UK, a pound, because they don't carry money, and never have to reach in their pocket to pay for anything. They always have a staff member who takes care of that for them.

However, the working Royals, do work. They just aren't in the trades or hold down an office job.

Many of the working Royals do have a rather gruelling schedule of constantly being on the move and going to different places. On top of that, they can't show up in public wearing ripped jeans and a hoodie. Image is everything when you are a member of ?the firm.'

Prince Charles, is currently heir apparent. He's not the most popular member of the Royal Family and many people have suggested he pass it up and allow his more popular son William take the throne.

However, it's not a popularity contest, it is a position for life that is passed to the next generation by a set of royal protocols.

Much of Prince Charles' less than perfect image comes from his first marriage, and his apparent poor treatment and lack of affection for his wife, Diana, who herself was wildly popular.

That could have all been avoided if Charles had been allowed to be with the woman he loved, rather than being forced to find a bride that fit all the strict Royal standards of the time.

Elizabeth II, has become the much loved and respected head of the Monarchy and the Commonwealth.

She has reigned with dignity and gained the respect of her loyal subjects. She has not endured any scandals, and has spent her entire life on the throne completing her royal duties in a proper fashion, without complaint, while maintaining the pageantry and international status that she represents around the world.

The Royal Family in the UK these days are largely a tourist attraction, on many levels and can draw crowds of thousands of people whenever there is an event which will have the family standing on the balcony at Buckingham palace, waving to the crowd.

The Monarchy, for the most part, is a dated institution based on a time when a King or Queen actually ruled a nation or a kingdom. In modern times, few people would accept a Monarch as leader of a government that made the decisions that determined the course of a nation.

However, the Monarchy as it is, represents stability in unstable times.

While governments fall and change, the Monarchy endures and has become a symbol of endurance and that stability that many people appreciate.