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PRINCESS ELIZABETH – FUTURE QUEEN

Queen Elizabeth II has ruled for longer than any other Monarch in British history, becoming a much loved and respected figure across the globe. Her extraordinary reign has seen her travel more widely than any other monarch, undertaking many historic overseas visits. Known for her sense of duty and her devotion to a life of service, she has been an important figurehead for the UK and the Commonwealth during times of enormous social change.

Elizabeth II (Elizabeth Alexandra Mary; born 21 April 1926) has been Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand since 6 February 1952. She is Head of the Commonwealth and Queen of 12 countries that have become independent since her accession: Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Canadian patriation, and the decolonization of Africa. She has reigned through various wars and conflicts involving many of her realms. She is the world's oldest reigning monarch as well as Britain's longest-lived. In 2015, she surpassed the reign of her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, to become the longest-reigning British monarch and the longest-reigning queen regnant and female head of state in world history. In October 2016, she became the longest currently reigning monarch and head of state following the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.

Times of personal significance have included the births and marriages of her children, her coronation in 1953, and the celebration of milestones such as her Silver, Golden, and Diamond Jubilees in 1977, 2002, and 2012, respectively. In 2017 she became the first British monarch to commemorate a Sapphire Jubilee. Moments of sadness for her include the death of her father in 1952 at age 56; the assassination of Prince Philip's uncle Lord Mountbatten in 1979; the breakdown of her children's marriages in 1992; the death in 1997 of her son's former wife, Diana, Princess of Wales; and the deaths of her mother and sister in 2002. Elizabeth has occasionally faced republican sentiments and press criticism of the royal family; however, support for the monarchy remains high, as does her personal popularity.

Elizabeth was born in London as the eldest child of the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and she was educated privately at home. Her father acceded to the throne on the abdication of his brother Edward VIII in 1936, from which time she was the heir presumptive.

She began to undertake public duties during the Second World War, serving in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. In 1947, she married Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, a former prince of Greece and Denmark, with whom she has four children: Charles, Prince of Wales; Anne, Princess Royal; Prince Andrew, Duke of York; and Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.

In this article we would like to explore Queen Elisabeth's early years and youth, when she was a princess, till the day of her accession to the throne. ...

On April the 21st 1926 the Duke and Duchess of York became the proud parents of a baby daughter. Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born in the early hours of the morning at 17 Bruton Street in London, the town residence of her maternal grandparents. True, she was third in line to the throne after her uncle, Edward, Prince of Wales, and her father. But few doubted that Edward would marry and have heirs of his own, distancing Elizabeth forever from becoming Queen.

She was less than a fortnight old when the country was plunged into chaos with the start of the General Strike. But after six difficult days, order was restored and the plans went ahead for Elizabeth's christening. It took place in the private chapel at Buckingham Palace on May 29.

When the family moved to a new, spacious home at 145 Piccadilly the baby and the nanny, Clara Knight, were allocated the top floor of the house. It was the nanny's face that the young Elizabeth came to know best as her parents pursued the lifestyle of most aristocrats at that time, leaving the nitty-gritty of baby care to their staff. In January 1927 the Duke and Duchess set off on a six-month tour. Their child, meanwhile, spent her first birthday with her grandparents, George V and Queen Mary, at Windsor Castle.

The other key figures in the young Elizabeth's life were her sister, Margaret Rose and their governess Marion Crawford. Her appointment effectively completed the Princess's isolation from the world beyond royal circles. Neither of the girls would ever know what it was like to be part of a school community. Although Marion did her best to take the young Princesses on educational visits outside the Palace, the classroom must have been a lonely place for them, with no other children to share their lessons. The closest they got to 'mixing up' with the crowd was in the select Girl Guide Company that was eventually set up at the Palace.

By all accounts, though, they enjoyed a contented family life with their parents. The Duke of York was a doting father who was not over-burdened by his workload. They divided their time between their London home and Royal Lodge in Windsor Great Park. They had horses and dogs and a life of privilege without great responsibility. It was a period of intense happiness and security for them all. Before long, however, everything would change.

George V was already sick in July 1935 as the country celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his accession. Six months later, he died at Sandringham, with his wife and children at the bedside. His eldest son, David, was proclaimed King and took the title Edward VIII. Elizabeth moved one step nearer to the throne. Still, though, the expectation remained that the new King would find a wife and produce an heir. But that was without bargaining for the irresistible pull of Wallis Simpson – American, twice-divorced and utterly bewitching to David. Forced to choose between her and the throne, he followed his heart – and Elizabeth's fate was sealed. She was ten years old and the Heir Presumptive.

Edward VIII's Abdication in December 1936 altered her life forever. Years later, Princess Margaret recalled her sister's reaction to this sudden change of destiny: "When our father became King, I said to her, 'Does that mean you're going to be Queen?' She replied, 'Yes, I suppose it does.' She didn't mention it again."

Reluctantly, for neither George VI nor Queen Elizabeth had wanted their new roles, the family moved to Buckingham Palace. They had a tough job ahead: to restore the public's faith in the monarchy. In pursuit of that, they relied heavily on the harmonious image projected by their tight-knit unit. Pictures of 'we four', as the King described his family, provided reassurance in the aftermath of the Abdication and in the menacing years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Elizabeth and Margaret spent those war years quietly at Windsor. Although the two sisters were very different in character: Elizabeth rather serious and responsible, Margaret extrovert and naughty, this enforced exile brought them close as children. They dabbled at putting on their own entertainment for specially invited guests, staging regular concerts and Christmas pantomimes in the Castle's Waterloo Chamber.

But Elizabeth was keen to play her part in the war effort and, in 1945, she finally persuaded her parents to allow her to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service. It was only a few months before the war in Europe ended but the Princess learned a little of life as the rest of us know it. She was taught how to strip an engine, change a wheel and drive an army truck. She wore her uniform proudly on VE Day when she seized another brief but graphic glimpse of the world outside her ivory tower. As she stood on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with her mother and father acknowledging the cheers of the crowds below, Elizabeth wanted only one thing – to be able to join in their celebration.

The end of the war also brought the return home of a serviceman who had already won Elizabeth's heart. Lieutenant Prince Philip of Greece, tall, blue-eyed and blonde was something of an Adonis, and by all accounts the Princess had been smitten by him since she was thirteen. Though their paths had crossed at various family functions, it was a meeting at the Royal Naval College at

Dartmouth in 1939 that sowed the seeds of their subsequent romance. It was shortly before the outbreak of war, and King and Queen and their daughters sailed into Dartmouth on an official visit. Philip, then a handsome eighteen-years-old Cadet Captain, was assigned to look after the girls. Elizabeth was bowled over.

But Elizabeth was scarcely more than a child; and Philip was about to go to war. There were occasional letters between them during those years of conflict, and Philip was invited to spend Christmas at Windsor in 1943. But it was only in 1946 that the rumors of romance began to take hold. Elizabeth was now twenty and sure of her feelings. The King, though, was less positive; he thought she was too young to marry and should have the opportunity to meet other potential husbands. He and the Queen counselled their daughter to take her time and in February 1947 whisked her off on a four-month tour of South Africa.

It was there that Princess Elizabeth made one of her most historical broadcasts, dedicating her life to the service of the Empire and Commonwealth. The occasion was her twenty first birthday: the venue Cape Town. In a clear, high-pitched voice she said: 'I declare before you that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great Imperial family to which we all belong. But I shall not have the strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in with me, as I now invite you to do. I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God helps me to make good my vow and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it'.

A few days later, the Royal Family set sail for home. It soon became obvious that the enforced separation had done nothing to cool Elizabeth and Philip's ardour and their engagement was announced. The wedding was to be on November 20, 1947 in the grand setting of Westminster Abbey. It turned out to be a cold, blustery morning, but thousands of people lined the streets from Buckingham Palace to the Abbey, cheering as the young bride passed by in the Irish State Coach.

Elizabeth was undoubtedly very much in love with her man. He may have been virtually penniless, but his good looks made him quite a head turner and his blood was as royal as her own. The son of a Greek Prince, he was also a direct descendant of Queen Victoria and had strong links with the Danish royal family and, even more so, with Germany. Philip swiftly became a British national with the surname Mountbatten. Even as a young man, he was fiercely independent; he found the strictures on his new life irksome.

Within a year Elizabeth and Philip became parents. Charles Philip Arthur George was born on the evening of November 14, 1948. Sadly Elizabeth had the worry of her father's increasing frailty: he was only in his fifties, but his health was failing. Two days after his grandson's birth he was forced to postpone a trip to Australia and New Zealand. Summer 1949 saw Elizabeth and Philip finally

move into Clarence House, their marital home. They relished the independence it brought them but there was little chance to settle down as a family unit as Philip's naval career took him to Malta.

Over the next two years, the Princess spent long periods with her husband on the island, enjoying life as a navy wife. She was freer than she would ever be again and she loved it. Charles, meanwhile, was looked after by nannies and grandparents-a fact that did not appear to trouble her unduly. After one absence of some five weeks, she returned to Clarence House to catch up with correspondence for four days before being reunited with Charles, who was at Sandringham. Soon, though, her family expanded: in August 1950, she gave birth to her second child, Anne.

As the King's health declined, more and more duties devolved to the Princess. In 1951, Philip accepted that he could no longer combine his naval career with his royal role and returned from Malta to support his wife. Before long she needed that support urgently.

The precise moment of Elizabeth's accession to the throne will never be known, but it was some time in the early hours of February 6, 1952. She and Philip were staying in the original Treetops Hotel, perched high in a wild fig tree in Kenya. They were on route to Australia and New Zealand, representing the King who was now suffering from cancer. At Sandringham meanwhile, despite his frailty George VI had enjoyed a day's shooting before sitting down to dinner with his wife and Princess Margaret. He seemed relaxed and listened to the latest radio reports about Elizabeth's progress in Africa before going to bed at about 10.30pm. That night he died in his sleep. At the instant of his death, the throne passed to Elizabeth.

It took more than four hours for the news of the King's death to filter through to Africa. By then Elizabeth and Philip had returned to Sagana Lodge, a farm near Nairobi that had been given to them as a wedding present by the Kenyan Government. Philip took her into the garden and walked with her slowly as they absorbed the full implications of what had happened. Far from home and aged just twenty-five Elizabeth had not only lost her much-loved father but also any vestige of carefree youth. She was now Queen and Head of State.

Her first decision was how she would be known. Her private secretary asked quietly what she wanted to be called: "My own name, Elizabeth", she replied.