

Remembering Your Father's "Oldsmobile"...

Contributed by
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DR. JANICE SETO: Our Correspondent in Canada offers up a fascinating perspective on the CBS interview given by Prince Charles to promote his work prior to this week's tour of America, and ponders on the Princess who was lost to us all.

Trust us, there's nothing Janice doesn't know about the world of monarchy and so be sure to stay tuned for her regular musings on all things royal - past, present AND future.

During his '60 Minutes' interview with Charles, Prince of Wales prior to HRH's 8-day tour of the US, CBS correspondent Steve Kroft looked exasperated several times. It was understandable why! With the off-limit topics including Charles's two sons and two wives, the only good soundbite Kroft (left) earned was Charles's comment that he wants to be seen as "relevant". Not for one second did the wily journalist believe the tour of the US had nothing to do with those forbidden topics. He was leashed, by protocol, like a greyhound in its prime, more akin to a correspondent working for Hello! magazine. The entire interview with Charles brought to mind a Canadian ad campaign of a few years ago. Those of you in North America will recall the ads GM launched to revive the famed Oldsmobile brand, "It's not your father's Oldsmobile...". The reverse is true here - Charles is exactly your father's Royal: Patrician. Professional. Slightly distant. Exactly so. Your father's experience of royals in the media....several decades ago. Charles also represents your father's fear of 'Life in the Fifties'. From 'Action Man' of the 1970s (as he was hyped to be) to 'Slippers & Pipe Grey Man'. At 57, the Prince of Wales is four years younger than actor Michael Douglas, whose second wife is the beautiful and intelligent Catherine Zeta-Jones. Also of Charles's generation are Piers Brosnan (007) and Ciaran Hinds (as Julius Caesar in the HBO/BBC production of 'Rome'), showing respectively that more and more men in their 50s do stay in the action in their prime. We Canadians well remember Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's many years in HIS prime (the man seemed to get his second wind every seven years!). How many of us recall the Charles and Diana team? When we think of previous tours and visits, it is the big hug Diana greeted Princes William and Harry with on the Royal Yacht Britannia moored off Toronto. But Charles and Diana together? Aside from the wedding and christenings, how much pleasure did they derive from each other's company? If Diana were still alive, can anyone doubt she would be 44 and vibrant? Looking good for her age, sans age lines typical of many royals. She did not smoke and would therefore have none of those cat's bum wrinkles around the lips. As committed to looking fit as Empress Elizabeth of Austria, Diana would probably look as amazing as Robin McGraw, Kim Cattrall, Demi Moore, Michelle Yeoh and Iman do today. Take your image of what Diana would look like now. Can't you just picture her chatting with actor Ciaran Hinds at a charity dinner, making all the front pages? Now shift your imagination so that she is next to Charles as he is now. The thirteen year age gap and their fundamentally different approaches to life would be more embarrassingly apparent. They just don't fit. Now, Camilla matches Charles. In the footage showing them attending the banquet with their Norwegian relatives, they marched in...grey, stooped, awkward, slow. They fit into fusty, dusty history books that tell of royal mistresses attempting to become "respectable". Canadians and Americans have a certain regard for survivors. Lately, US TV icon Martha Stewart has made a comeback following her spell in jail. Once you pay your dues, you get a second chance at relevance. That's the way it works over here. Charles focused on being relevant in his interview - royal parlance for 'Come Back' to our former regard for him. Well, before he can get to relevance, first we have to ask: has Charles paid his dues yet? Until the public decides the answer is a definitive 'yes', he remains sidelined, his question of his "relevance" being one he already knows the answer to.