

THE POWER OF “WE”

Being a dyed-in-the-wool American, I never really bought into the “Royal We” thing. The way the Queen Mum says “We are pleased” or “We are most miffed” always struck me as an eerie brain and soul sucking, Borg-Collective sci-fi thing. The same holds for those who think simply possessing a job warrants royal treatment or being held beyond reproach or approach.

Some leadership positions clearly command respect as they directly affect millions of lives, but the notion of the blue blooded “Royal We” never held its hue for this red blooded American guy. Then in 2001, I met “We”.

Generals are where rubber meets the air. Chief Master Sergeants are where the rubber meets the road. “We” was a chief’s chief. I will never forget that picture perfect gentle warrior, a beautiful physical specimen of a man, cradling a bible worn down by his “We-ness” as he sat in a chemotherapy chair, September 11, 2001.

After what seemed like every test known to man, I decided the excruciating pain and progressive muscular weakness draining this blue-blood was due to a macabre tango between his immune system and an apparently cured lymphoma that still somehow held a manipulating dance card. My team was one among those trying to bring the 1975 Nobel Prize winning guided missile marvels known as monoclonal antibodies into the clinic in new ways. Now, of all days, here was “We” and I trying to negotiate a peace by controlling tumor terrorism.

“We” explained that his USAF enlisted dad had first used the “Royal We” “We” used it ever since when things got tough. Eight years old, blocked from entering housing and complaining about having to hole up with five others in the family Buick, his dad said, “Son, we have a great nation with some wrong. We all have to get along to make it better. So remember, there is all the room in the universe in “We”. “We” junior gave his life to God that first Buick night. I think the transaction has clearly gone both ways.

“We” received the most prestigious USAF medal for heroism in peacetime as a new airman. In the black of night, this equally dark young man stopped his car having spied a burning home in a neighborhood recently inflamed with racist hate. “We” rescued two wheel chair bound former Klan members inside.

I remember him in the chemotherapy room, his eyes filled with laughter’s mist saying, “Not too much more stupid than running into a burning building, well, yes, running back in is pretty stupid” He was decorated again 20 years later when he careened his car into an embankment to sprint, tackle and subdue a knife wielding, massive man pummeling his naked wife who “We” saw run into the street while others simply watched.

It was “We” who between chemotherapy treatments, in a wheel chair, flew to Afghanistan after 9/11 to support “our boys” while rationalizing to his General, “We cannot send them where we would not go”

Normally the military will discharge those clearly not fit for full duty on a moment's notice. The board's response was one I had never seen. It stated, "We still have need for this warrior and we will find a way"

"We" recovered strength, retired after his "boys" were home and moved back home to his dad's town where he tells me "We" are doing just fine, thank you

I was too self involved studying those many years ago in the UK to understand there are "Royal We's". I had the privilege of saluting and serving one.

Station, position and experience alone do not confer a crown, a '57 Buick Special can be a regal nursery and royalty can be taught. The "Royal We" is within the power of choice for you and me.

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