

Russian Princes and Princesses, in Eastern Kentucky?

Years ago, my little Arab buddies, as I called them, at Ohio U., Athens, would say: "You are the only American we know who can trace his ancestry back 1,000 years, and we can all do that. Why is that?"

Why, indeed? My answer was: "Americans tend to care nothing about history, even their own. Some of them cannot even tell you the names of their grandparents." That is not libel. One of my father's sisters, speaking of her grandfather, asked: "Wasn't his name 'Ben'?"

"Yes," I answered, "his name was 'Benjamin'." Close, but no prize.

One of my great grandfathers, times 5, Philip Llewellyn, was born 1737, in Wales. He immigrated to the colonies, and died in Washington County, Pennsylvania, in 1783. Though Philip never made it to eastern Kentucky, his descendants did.

Philip always told others that he was descended from royalty. And, what do you know? He was. I have traced his ancestry, in the hope of finding that Philip was descended from Llewellyn Fawr (Welsh for "the Great"), and he was. However, I cannot, using Philip's surname, prove that. Though his pedigree arrives at exactly what Philip said, and it may be just as true using the Llewellyn name, it is only that I cannot demonstrate that, using the name "Llewellyn".

Philip's daughter, Rebecca Llewellyn, was born in 1758, in Washington Co., PA. She married Johann Andreas Zornes, in Morgantown (W.) VA, in 1780. Andreas ("Andrew," as he came to be called), was a man who had been a servant, in Massenbach, Baden-Wurtemberg, Deutschland. However, because of their descent from Rebecca, the sons and daughters of a servant from Germany, without knowing they had done so, became a different social class than their father's family allows.

Then too, to be fair, everyone is descended from every plowboy who had children, and worked the fields, in whatever country, anywhere in the world, 1,500 years ago. The human race becomes one, after fifty generations. Or so they say, who say they know. Anthropologists now say we all come from a man and a woman in east Africa, about 200,000 years ago. So, it seems a truism, that: "God has made of one blood, all the nations of the world, for to dwell upon the face of the earth."

How did that Llewellyn connection become a James connection? Rebecca Zornes (1795-1836), ---daughter of Rebecca Llewellyn and Johann Andreas Zornes---married George W. James ("Warsh," as they used to pronounce "Washington," in Appalachia, when I was a boy). She died, in Carter Co., KY, in 1836. George died, in 1855. She and George were the parents of Andrew, who was the father of George, who was the father of Andrew, who was my grandfather.

The good news about those names is: My ancestors were traditionalists. George followed Andrew, who followed George, for about two hundred years. My only-begotten son, Ian Andrew Stephen James, can attest to that.

Johann Andreas Zornes (1747-1844) was born in Baden-Wurtemberg, but died in Carter Co., KY., USA. Carter County was rather remote, even when I grew up there, a hundred years after Andreas died. Did Andreas ever miss Germany? Did he think in German and translate his thoughts into English? How does anyone use language to structure reality? Ah, but he likely did not teach his children to speak German. I am the only one of Andreas' descendants I know who speaks any German, and, until recently, I had never heard of him. How lonely it must have been, for him. A stranger in a strange land.

My favorite German used to deny being a German. "I am not a German," he would say, "I am a Catholic!"

"Oh?" I always responded, "do you think in 'Catholic'? I don't think so."

I recently wrote to the French Embassy, asking them for a piece of information. I wrote in French, out of courtesy. They didn't reply. My next letter asked: "Do you read French?" I asked if they would rather I use some other language. "Ich schreiben Deutsche, auch," I wrote. ("I also can write in German.") And, what happened? They still didn't answer my question, but they did send me maps of la France, which was nice. Pointless, but "nice." I recently resolved what seems irresolvable, by writing to the American Embassy, in Paris. In English. I hope that works.

Having grown up in Carter Co., KY, I was amazed to find a German ancestor (from Germany) on my doorstep. Somehow being a Welshman, even one who likely spoke Cymru (pronounced "Koom ree," and is Welsh for "Wales") may seem a bit odd, but not really strange, primarily because Welsh was the first non-English language I ever heard spoken. I was about six, and visiting in Gallia Co., OH. There, I heard a friend of my father speaking to his mother. Not a word of English passed between them. I was fascinated. Gallia County, in those days, had so many Welshmen, one of my aunts by marriage (who taught school in Gallia Co.) once asked: "James is a Welsh name, isn't it? Here, if you're not Welsh, you are nothing."

Cymru am bith! ("Wales for ever!") I always say, if pushed. Being a descendant of Llewellyn the Great is important to me, as it evidently was to Philip Llewellyn. Why? Because, among other reasons, Prince Llewellyn was the prince who united all Wales into one principality; he was also a great, great grandfather of the great Scottish hero, King Robert the Bruce; and, he was married to Joan of N. Wales, a bastard of King John of England. As you may imagine, being a bastard of John, King of England, opens a whole other can of worms.

Since John was England's least successful king, it will be seen that finding him is somewhat less than "grand." No matter how much I may have failed, I haven't stupidly lost England's treasury in the on-coming tide! John did, though, to be sure, he didn't do that, personally. In John's defense, I have customarily maintained that his story got lost, somewhere along the way. His enemies took it over, and spread the word as they preferred his story to be told. "History," as Napoleon cynically observed, "is lies which have been agreed upon."

Look at John this way: He is the Father of our Civil Liberties! By being forced to sign the Magna Carta, he established rights which have matured, over the centuries. (Think habaeus corpus, if you please.) Then, too, there was John's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. She was legendary, all on her own. Never mind that she is alleged to have gone bare-breasted to the Crusades. My favorite example of her thinking was to be found in a letter she wrote to the pope. It began: "Moi, Elinor, a la colere de Dieu, reine de la Angleterre . . ." ("I, Eleanor, by the wrath of God, Queen of England"). You've got to love a person with such a perverse sense of humor.

There really is only one problem with descent from Eleanor: She comes with a curse. Her grandfather, Guillaume IX, duke of Aquitaine, was given (as others in my family have been) to mocking others. Guillaume mocked some poor monk so mercilessly, the monk turned on him and said: "I curse you, you and all your descendants, whether in the male or the female line. None of you will ever have peace with his children." What a dreadful thing to say.

To soften the blow: What the monk said may be seen to be analogous to saying, "May all your children be born naked." The curse served Eleanor ill. She was plagued with four sons. Though she seems to have been fairly popular with them (and joined them in conspiracies against their father), she suffered imprisonment for the last 20 years of her life, largely because they used her in their political games.

John was King Henry II's favorite son. One wonders why, but, that is how it was. So, when Henry was in his last illness, the "boys" were rebelling against him one last time. When their rebellion was quelled, a servant brought the king a list of the names of those who had led the rebellion. Henry wanted to hear it. The servant demurred. The king insisted. The first name on the list was "John."

When Henry heard that name, it is said he turned his face to the wall and died. As the Italians are wont to say: "Se non e vero e bene trovato." (If it isn't true, it's a good story.) Was the curse transplanted from Eleanor, by marriage? Was it just bad parenting skills? Ambition, greed, lust for power? All of those things?

Henry, II, was the son of Geoffrey, Vth, "the Handsome," Count of Anjou, and Maud (Matilda), the daughter of Henry, I, who became "Empress Maud" by marrying the Holy Roman Emperor. She never gave up that title. She insisted that she be called "Empress" to the end of her days. Geoffrey was 18, and she was 24, when her father (Henry I) forced her to marry again. Geoffrey's father, Fulk, Vth, was King of Jerusalem. As I recall, he bought that title. Well, why not?

When Philip Llewellyn claimed (rightly) that he was descended from royalty, doubtless he thought of the alleged "glory" of all that. But, some wag, speaking of His Britannic Majesty, Charles, II, in the 17th century, put descent from royal persons into a startlingly clear perspective. He wrote: "It must always be remembered that His Majesty also uses the chamber pot."

Fulk, III, Count of Anjou, Geoffrey "the handsome's" grandfather, was a man so taken with the power, one of his contemporary critics said: "He cared nothing for what others said, least of all the Word of God!" Reading some of the things he did causes one to conclude that Fulk, III was a

psychopath. Here's just one example: He found his wife in the arms of a goatherd. He caused her to be dressed in her wedding gown (apparently to accent the enormity of having violated the marriage bed), and burnt her at the stake! One doesn't want to know what happened to that goatherd, poor little fellow. He had crossed an impenetrable boundary of class distinction, and paid dearly for that.

Yet, royal infidelity seems to come with the territory: Joan of N. Wales, the wife of Llewellyn the Great, was caught in the adulterous embrace of William de Braose, who was married to Gwladus Ddu, Prince Llewellyn's daughter, by Joan. That, obviously, is a no-no. So, Llewellyn the Great had Mortimer drawn and quartered. (There is no mention of what Llewellyn's Gwladus Ddu thought about that.)

What being "drawn and quartered" means is: De Braose was hanged, but taken down while he was still alive. His penis and testicles were cut off, and then burnt before his eyes. Then his bowels were systematically removed, and also burnt. If anything is perfect, that is a perfectly dreadful way to die.

At some point, one hopes, the person being thus executed went into shock, and did not know what was happening. Finally, the head was lopped off, and the body was carved until four pieces, and those pieces were sent around the kingdom to prove the traitor had met his (deserved) fate. In England, a person who was beheaded usually had his head placed on a pike at the entrance to the Tower of London. It served as a threat and a warning to others who might be tempted to do something treasonous. I don't know what Llewellyn did with de Braose's head.

Someone recently asked: "Why would anyone want to be descended from such people?" Alas, being related to anyone, the good, the bad, the losers or the great, saints or sinners, one is not offered a choice. One takes whatever there was, just as, at a birth, one takes whatever comes out.

These days, with the royal wedding in the offing in London there is talk of Kate Middleton being a "commoner." (A commoner whose father is a millionaire!) It's as though there were a biological, qualitative difference between kings and common folk. Is it not clear? Royalty is NOT qualitatively different from the rest of mankind! To put Prince William's ancestry into another file folder, if an article in [The Columbus \(Ohio\) Dispatch](#) is to be trusted, HRH William is the great grandson (times 5) of a tanner and his wife, from Chillicothe, OH. Is history repeating itself? William's distant ancestor, William the Conqueror, was descended from a tanner's daughter from Falais, in Normandy, France.

(Yes, I know, Mark Twain once observed: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.")

The French have an expression which covers the implied obligation of the nobly-born to act in a way commensurate with their birth: "Noblesse oblige." Let me give you the [Oxford Dictionary](#) definition for that: "The inferred responsibility of privileged people to act with generosity and nobility towards those less privileged." It is surprising that such an expression even exists. What usually comes to the fore is somewhat less than high-minded. There was, for example, what happened in Buckingham Palace, when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, II, was informed of her former daughter-in-law (Princess Diana)'s death. What heart warming thing did she say?

She is said to have said: "Secure the jewels!"

She is not descended, as Philip Llewellyn was, from remote royal persons. She seems the very embodiment of that nobility of which we are speaking, which, at a moment of stress, was set aside. What was her concern? Jewels.

In a recent edition of The New York Review of Books, we were informed that a British aristocrat was descended ". . . from royal blood. . . six English and French kings." I wrote to The Review (in a letter they will likely never publish) to say: "Kings do not come as beer does, in 6 packs. Kings are like fleas. Where one can be found, there are dozens of others."

Let us return to great grandfather Philip Llewellyn's remote ancestor, King Henry I. He married Edith of Scotland (whom the Normans later called "Maud"). She was the daughter of King Malcolm, III, whose father was Duncan MacCrinan, whom MacBeth is (by Shakespeare) falsely accused of murdering. Her mother was St. Margaret of Scotland. St. Margaret's mother was the Grand Duchess Agatha (of Kiev). Her father was Edward the Aethling, of Saxon England. The Saxon kings' (mythological) pedigree goes back, after about 50 generations, to the god Odin. So, Philip Llewellyn may be descended from a god?! Well, yes.

Agatha's ancestry includes Yaroslav "the Wise," Great Prince of Kiev; Great Prince Yaropolk, and the Holy Great Prince Vladimir, "Equal of the Holy Apostles," among others. St. Vladimir was, as William the Conqueror was, born a bastard. St. Vladimir's father was the Great Prince Svyatoslav "the Accursed." He was said to be accursed, because he killed his own brother, to rise to power. Svyatoslav was the son of the Great Prince Igor, and St. Olga, "Equal of the Holy Apostles."

According to Tsarist Law, anyone who is descended from any of the princes of Russia, no matter how far back in time, nor how little of the empire he ruled over, whether in the male or the female line, regardless of the station in life he has come to occupy, that person is a prince ("Knyaz," in Russian). To prove that is really true, bear in mind that Trubetskoy, Count Tolstoy's butler, was a descendant of Lithuanian princes. He was a lowly butler, yet all the other servants called Trubetskoy "Knyaz."

St. Vladimir's titles (in transliterated Russian) are these: Sveti Vladika knyaz Vladimir, Isapostolos, "the Holy Great Prince Vladimir, Equal of the Holy Apostles." He was a "Great Prince." His descendants are just "prince," or "princess." And if, in 300 years, one couple can have a million descendants, being a descendant of St. Vladimir must be roughly analogous to being a notary public, there are so many of us.

St. Vladimir's grandmother, St. Olga "Equal of the Holy Apostles," was widowed. Her husband, Prince Igor was murdered. A tribe of persons of whom you likely never heard (Dravilians/Dravidians) were accused of the murder of the Great Prince Igor. In taking revenge, St. Olga caused the whole tribe to be buried alive. Monstrous! That being so, why is Olga seen to be a saint? Because, the lives of saints generally come heavily edited. That, and a communist historian has pointed out that about 86% of all the saints were "royal." There are various rewards, for being a king. It's good to be the king.

Was St. Olga showing “Noblesse oblige” or even humanity? Hardly. But, try to remember: Neither Great Grandfather Philip Llewellyn nor I did these things. It is not our fault. Any apology from Philip or me, would be morally meaningless. However, both Philip and I, being the descendants of The Holy Great Prince Vladimir, as well as Tsar Vladimir Monomakh, and Tsar Mistislav, et al., profited by still being “princes.” It is what economists call “an unearned increment.” From what I know about Philip, he would have liked that.

There is always the possibility that, regardless of what Philip meant by telling others he was descended from royalty, he simply bored the bejeebers out of his listeners. Then, too, St. Dorothea of Gaza (6th century) warned that one should “Live through lowliness of mind, instead of going to your death through pretentious pride.” But, pride in a good sense, never killed anybody. If all Philip did was to speak of his ancestors as persons whose reputations hadn’t caught up with them, that is one thing; if he thought royal ancestors made him “better,” that would be quite another matter. At this distance, it is impossible to know what he meant. After all, it was the truth that he was descended from dozens of kings, and here and there a god.

I hope that, somewhere, in the heavenly places (?), there are those who kiss Philip’s hand, and call him “Highness.” He might have liked that. It’s an ancient Russian custom, after all. Or barring that, at the very least, I hope Philip is at peace, and enjoying fellowship with the saints, in glory everlasting.

Copyright, 2011

Laurence J. James, Ph.D., knyaz,

1936 Chesler St., Comins, MI 48619 (989) 848-5757