

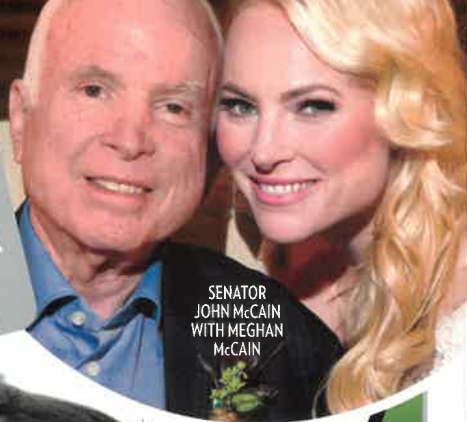


People

EXCLUSIVE

McCAIN FAMILY

TEARS & JOY AT DAUGHTER MEGHAN'S WEDDING



SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN WITH MEGHAN MCCAIN

HARRY'S AMERICAN PRINCESS

WHY SHE'S THE ONE!

'All the stars were aligned'

—PRINCE HARRY ON FALLING IN LOVE WITH MEGHAN MARKLE

The surprising love story of Prince Harry & Meghan Markle
All about her ring—with diamonds from Princess Diana
Plans for the wedding—and kids!

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**Their Debut—
and That Ring!**

The couple stepped out for their engagement photo call at Kensington Palace on Nov. 27. Inset below: Meghan's ring, which Harry designed with British jeweler Cleave & Company, a favorite of the Queen's. It features two diamonds that belonged to Princess Diana and a third from Botswana, where the couple have vacationed.



**At Home at
the Palace**

Photographers gathered for the announcement on Nov. 27 outside the couple's new London home. Nottingham Cottage, where they will live on the palace grounds, is a short walk from William and Kate's palace residence.

**Prince Harry &
Meghan Markle**

Engaged!



AFTER FALLING IN LOVE 'INCREDIBLY QUICKLY' WITH THE AMERICAN ACTRESS, THE WORLD'S MOST ELIGIBLE ROYAL BACHELOR PROPOSES WITH A RING FIT FOR A PRINCESS—AND THE COUPLE PREPARE FOR LIFE IN THE PALACE

By **MICHELLE TAUBER**

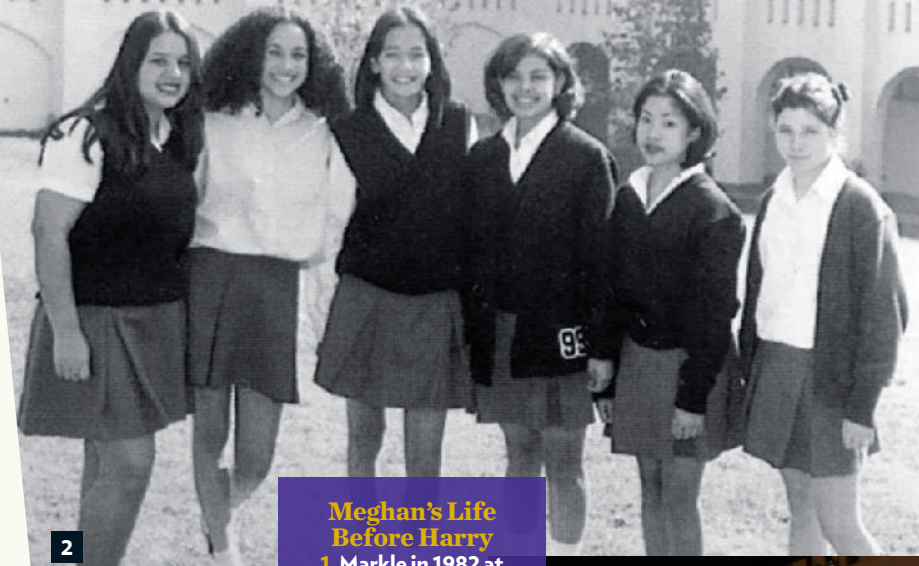


The changes were happening in plain sight, but they were still easy to miss. There was Prince Harry, hitting the gym with increased frequency, looking just a little fitter than he did this time last year. The former Army captain was refining his diet too, recently remarking that he had given up pizza and was educating himself about wine. Perhaps most tellingly, his longtime bachelor pad at Kensington Palace was in the midst of an overhaul—interiors being redone and spruced up. Those close to Harry, however, knew exactly what was happening: Head over heels in love with American actress Meghan Markle, he was steadily shaping himself into her future husband. From Cabernet to home cooking, "he has been catching up quick," says an insider.

The same can be said for his soon-to-be royal bride, who is in the process of changing everything from her home base to her primary profession. The former *Suits* star—who is



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Meghan's Life Before Harry

1. Markle in 1982 at 6 months old.

2. Markle (second from left) with her Immaculate Heart classmates in Los Angeles.

3. At 17 as homecoming queen in 1998.

4. An undated school photo.

5. With her ex-husband, Trevor Engelson, in 2006.

6. As Rachel Zane on *Suits*. Her costar Patrick J. Adams tweeted, "Your Royal Highness, you are a lucky man and I know your long life together will be joyful, productive and hilarious."

7. With her mom, Doria Ragland, going to yoga in Toronto last December.



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PREVIOUS SPREAD: FROM LEFT: PAI IMAGES/SPA; CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES; DOUG PETERS/EPIC ENTERTAINMENT/PA IMAGES/SPA; OPPOSITE PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SPLASH NEWS; MEGA; BILLY FARRELL/PATRICK MCMULLAN/GETTY IMAGES; SPLASH NEWS; BEN MARK HOLZBERG/USANETWORK/PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; MEGA; 2: THIS PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: TIM GRANA/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY SUZANNE NEVILLE; COURTESY LE SPOSE DIGIO; COURTESY SASSI HOLFORD; COURTESY CAROLINE CASTIGLIANO

leaving the USA legal drama after seven seasons—stood before the world as Harry's fiancée on Nov. 27 as perfectly polished as the three-stone yellow-gold diamond ring on *that* finger. Explaining Harry's "surprise" proposal in November, Meghan, 36, told the BBC in a joint interview just hours after the couple's engagement announcement that it was "a cozy night—we were trying to roast chicken" at Nottingham Cottage, Harry's two-bedroom residence on the grounds of London's Kensington Palace. "It was so sweet and natural and very romantic," she added. "He got on one knee." Turning to Harry, she gushed, "I could barely let you finish proposing. I said, 'Can I say yes now?'" For his part, Harry, 33, spoke in soaringly romantic terms about the woman he plans to wed this spring. "I fell in love with Meghan so incredibly quickly—it was a confirmation to me that all the stars were aligned," he said. "This beautiful woman literally tripped and fell into my life. I fell into her life." Even his grandmother Queen Elizabeth's famously yappy corgis, he noted, were smitten. "I've spent the last 33 years being barked at, [and] this one walks in, absolutely nothing," he said, gesturing to Meghan. "Just tails wagging!" Although her only previous royal experience was as homecoming queen at her high school, Harry marveled at his new fiancée's rapid learning curve. "The fact that she will be unbelievably good at the job part of it," he said, "is obviously a huge relief to me because she'll be able to deal with everything else that comes with it."



The remarkable interview—during which the pair openly discussed everything from Harry's mother, Princess Diana (she and Meghan "would have been thick as thieves," he said), to how they met (on a blind date set up by a friend)—capped a fairytale romance that even Walt Disney couldn't have dreamed up. The first American to marry into the British royal family since Wallis Simpson infamously scandalized the monarchy 81 years ago (see box), Meghan began blazing her own path long before Harry strolled onto it. The Los Angeles-raised daughter of Tom Markle, a onetime sound engineer on the '80s sitcom *Married... with Children*, and Doria Ragland, who has worked as a yoga instructor and social worker, young Meghan was "bubbly, optimistic and positive," says a former classmate at the private Catholic school Immaculate Heart. As a drama student who performed in numerous school plays, "she had the talent and focus to back it up, and you could tell she knew the work it would take and she was willing to put in the work," adds the classmate.

Say Yes to the Dress!

4 DESIGNERS OFFER THEIR IDEAS FOR MEGHAN'S BIG DAY



CAROLINE CASTIGLIANO
A "classic yet sensual and stylish" gown.



SASSI HOLFORD
Holford's "dramatic silhouette" is for a grand cathedral.



LE SPOSE DIGIO
"Simplicity means perfection," says Marisa De Capitani.



SUZANNE NEVILLE
"I think she will choose clean lines," says Neville.



Growing Up Royal

A 2-year-old Harry posed with his big brother, Prince William, and parents Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1986. "She would have been best friends with Meghan," Harry said of his mom.

After graduating from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., Meghan worked her way up the Hollywood ladder, carrying a briefcase on *Deal or No Deal* and appearing in one-off roles before landing the part of paralegal Rachel Zane on *Suits*. She also built her own lifestyle site, The Tig, and honed a humanitarian focus with global groups like the United Nations and World Vision. She and Harry, who has found purpose and passion since launching the Invictus Games for wounded service members—along with taking up the mantle for causes close to Diana's heart, including HIV testing and land mines—immediately bonded over their shared commitments. "They are blissfully happy together and have been since the very beginning," says a source. "There really are no two people as made for each other as they are. They share such a passion for philanthropy and helping others—that really was a bond that made everything click." Adds a royal-family friend: "She is a modern woman, a career woman. She is perfect for him and will be great by his side as they do charity work together."



In marrying Harry, Meghan is largely agreeing to step away from the acting career she has long



Hitting Their Stride

The couple began dating in July 2016, with Harry taking Meghan to Botswana soon after. “We camped out with each other under the stars, which was absolutely fantastic,” he said.

‘Hopefully we’ll start a family in the near future’

—HARRY ON HAVING KIDS



built. “I think what’s been really exciting as we talk about the transition of this out of my career ... [is that] the causes that have been very important to me I can focus even more energy on,” she told the BBC, “because very early out of the gate I think you realize once you have access or a voice that people are going to listen to, with that comes a lot of responsibility—which I take seriously.” The source downplays her departure from Hollywood, noting, “Her main passion has always been philanthropy.”

There is no question, however, that she is an altogether new kind of royal bride. Like Simpson she is divorced—her two-year marriage to pro-

ducer Trevor Engelson ended in 2013—though that is no longer an issue to either the monarchy or the Church of England. She has also spoken extensively about her biracial background, another first for the royal family. Harry, who is fifth in line to the throne—sixth after the upcoming birth of his brother William and sister-in-law Kate’s third baby in April—had previously dated women with tony pedigrees: Cressida Bonas, the granddaughter of an English earl, and Chelsy Davy, the daughter of an ultra-wealthy private landowner in Africa. “Harry will want to do things his way, and the most important thing for him is to protect Meghan,” says another source. “He is very con-

Their Wedding Plans

WHERE

Although William and Kate wed at London’s grand Westminster Abbey, experts suspect Harry and Meghan will choose something a *little* more low-key. Among the contenders: St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle. (Sadly, there would be no balcony kiss!)



WHO

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, is expected to officiate. “I wish them many years of love, happiness and fulfillment,” he tweeted.

WHEN

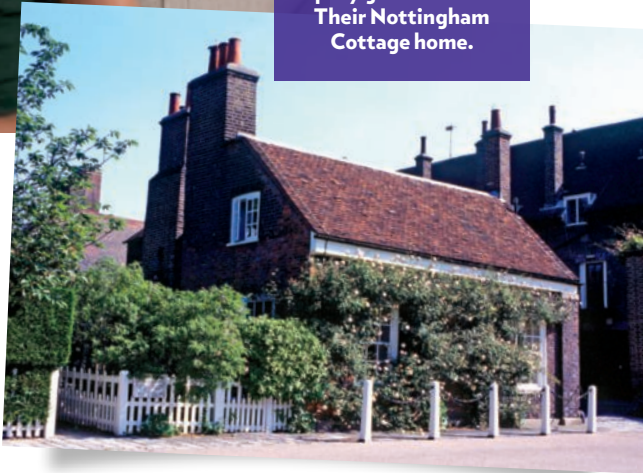
Spring 2018. Of note: William and Kate’s baby is due in April!



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PA IMAGES/SIPA; CHRIS RATCLIFFE/GETTY IMAGES; SQUIRE/MEGA



Their New Life Together
 “It was a really authentic and organic way to get to know each other,” Meghan said in the BBC interview (left) of the couple’s initial off-the-radar courtship. Harry said that upon meeting Meghan, he realized, “I have to really up my game.” Below: Their Nottingham Cottage home.



‘I don’t see it as giving anything up. I just see it as a change’
 —MEGHAN ON LEAVING HOLLYWOOD

scious of that.” And while the royal-family friend says Harry was “very fond” of his exes—both of whom later shared their discomfort in the glare of the spotlight—Meghan is the right woman at the right time. “She seems very happy with her lot,” says the friend. “She is a great young woman. She will be a brilliant wife—she is glamorous and gregarious.”



Those qualities will no doubt serve her well as she embarks on one of the most glamorous jobs in the world: real-life royal. But first there is a wedding to plan. The Archbishop of Canterbury is expected to officiate the ceremony (see box), and the couple will work closely with Harry’s office at Kensington Palace to pull together the details. (Meghan’s close friend Jessica Mulroney is a bridal stylist.) The bride-to-be is also busy settling into her new life in London, where one of her rescue dogs has already joined her. “She’s always loved London and is excited to be spending even more time

there as the engagement moves forward,” says the first source. As for Christmas, which the royal family typically spends with the Queen at her Sandringham estate, “knowing Harry, I wouldn’t be surprised if he jets off to L.A. at Christmas or around Christmas to spend time with her family,” says another insider.

In other words: This is a couple who will continue to write their own romance rules. Having long admired William and Kate’s marriage, which blossomed during their college years, “I think [Harry] looked on his brother with some envy that William did find somebody who wasn’t thrust in front of him or was arranged for him, but was something that took its natural course,” says former royal bodyguard Ken Wharfe. “I think this is the way that Harry was always going to find someone.” And now that he has, a hoped-for family of his own is closer than ever. Harry has “been through a lot” after losing his mother at age 12 and serving two tours of duty in Afghanistan, notes a close family friend. “He deserves every bit of happiness. They really have a lot in common in terms of their focus on life. They are good people. They have great ideas and will set the world alight.”



The American Bride Who Changed Royal History
 Before Meghan the only American to marry a high-ranking British royal was Wallis Simpson, whose previous divorces made her unsuitable to wed King Edward VIII. Undeterred, he abdicated the throne—paving the way for Harry’s great-grandfather George VI. The couple wed in June 1937 and lived in exile.

Reporting by **Simon Perry, Monique Jessen** and **Patrick Gomez**

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: SNOWDON/TRUNK ARCHIVE; BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES