

Yankee Steve's Almanac
for the week of October 28, 2008

NEWS FLASH! British scientist spends money advertising that God does not exist. [10/2008] Prominent atheist, Professor Richard Dawkins, has put his money where his mouth is. Not only has he denounced faith in God; he now supports a bus campaign which tells passengers: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." Buses with this slogan could soon be running on the streets of Great Britain. Supposedly the atheist posters are the idea of the British Humanist Association (BHA).

OldLineConservative responds,
Circa 1850 a missionary asked an African chief who had never seen a white man or read a book, "Do you believe there is a God?"
"Yes," he replied.
"So then how is it that you know God exist?"
The chief's answer, "How do I know that a goat walked across my fields this morning; I see his footprints."

American Wisdom

Diligence is the mother of good luck, and God gives all things to industry. attributed to Franklin

Let a young man get a job and work so hard at it that he has no time to fall into temptation.
Thomas Edison 1847-1931

This is the first test of a gentleman: his respect for those who can be of no possible value to him.
William Lyon Phelps 1865-1943

Now and then an innocent man is sent to the legislature. Kin Hubbard 1868-1930

We'd all like t'vote fer th'best man, but he's never a candidate. Kin Hubbard

The 10 Most Extravagant Weddings Ever
list compiled by Laurie Penny; adapted from the *London Times* on-line

In June of 2008 Wayne Rooney and Colleen McLaughlin of Great Britain were married in a lavish ceremony rumored to have cost about £5 million (about 9 million dollars). But while the wedding was criticized in some quarters for its excess, there are plenty of other contenders for the title of most extravagant wedding ever.

1. Liza Minnelli and David Gest (March 17, 2002)

Cost: £1.8 million

The Oscar-winning actress' wedding was a real cabaret, with fleets of black limousines sweeping guests to the Marble Collegiate Church where Minnelli (56) and Gest (48) tied the knot in true Manhattan style. Gest, who compulsively collects memorabilia of Minnelli's mother, Judy Garland, wed the actress in an extravagant ceremony orchestrated by world-famous wedding planner Preston Bailey. The wedding was attended by hordes of celebrities including Michael Jackson as best man and Elizabeth Taylor as maid of honor, who enjoyed a twelve-tier wedding cake and 60-piece orchestra. One bridesmaid described the event as "the night of 1,000 facelifts."

2. Princess Elizabeth Windsor (later Queen Elizabeth II) and Prince Philip (November, 20 1947)

Cost: unknown

The magnificence of the royal wedding, with its Norman Hartnell dresses and nine 400 lb. wedding cakes was frowned upon by some quarters in the frugal atmosphere of post-war Britain, although ingredients for the main cake were in fact a gift from the Australian Girl Guides Association. For the rest, the splendor was a welcome break from the privations of a ration-book economy. Thousands turned out on to the streets to cheer for the princess and her new husband, who King George VI gifted with the titles Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Merioneth, and Baron Greenwich for the occasion. In the interests of economy, some officials proposed an elaborate fireworks display in order to make use of the "surplus explosive chemicals" left over from the war. from Times Archive, 1947: Marriage of Princess Elizabeth

3. David Beckham and Victoria Adams (July 4, 1999)

Cost: £500,000

The multi-millionaires lovingly known to the world as "Posh 'n' Becks" wed at Luttrellstown Castle in Ireland in a not-so-subtle statement on the coincidence of royalty and celebrity at the turn of the 21st century. Fireworks and white doves filled the sky as the newlyweds posed on a pair of magnificent velvet thrones, the bride wearing a large gold crown studded with diamonds. *OK! Magazine* bought exclusive rights to the Beckham wedding for £1 million, the largest sum ever offered for a celebrity wedding.

4. Amit Bhatia and Vanisha Mittal (June 18-21, 2002)

Cost: £30 million

In the most expensive wedding festivities ever conducted, four days of lavish revelry marked the nuptials of banker Amit Bhatia and Vanisha, daughter of the steel magnate Laxmi Mittal. The engagement ceremony is said to have been the only public function ever held at the palace of Versailles near Paris. Later nightclubs were hired across the city and the couple starred in a specially written full-scale Bollywood musical version of their early relationship. Kylie Minogue was among the many performers. Thousands of guests, flown in from over the world, sipped cocktails after the Mehendi ceremony, and world-famous artist Ash Kumar designed an exclusive henna pattern to match the embroidery on the bride's designer dress.

5. Donald Trump and Melania Knauss (Jan 22, 2005)

Cost: £900,000

Real-estate mogul Trump married his third wife, Slovenian model Melania Knauss, in a ceremony at Palm Beach. The wedding was designed to be “understated,” despite the bride’s £106,000 dress by John Galliano, which sported a 13-foot train and weighed an astonishing 50 lb. Scores of rowdy onlookers gathered outside the reception desperate to spot celebrity guests such as Hilary Clinton, Tony Bennett, and Billy Joel, who later serenaded the waiting crowds in an impromptu performance. “This is the closest you’ll get to a royal wedding in America,” said one guest.

6. Barry Drewitt and Tony Barlow (July 1, 2006)

Cost: £800,000

Chemical research millionaires Drewitt and Barlow became the Britain’s first openly gay surrogate parents after a five-year transatlantic battle, and were the first men to be recorded jointly as parents on a birth certificate. This extraordinary family does nothing by halves, and their wedding in Chelmsford, Essex was no exception. Daughter Saffron, five, who already owned 150 pairs of shoes and £200,000 worth of designer clothes and bags, chose a Christian Dior off-the-shoulder dress for the event. Her dad and daddy arrived at the ceremony in a pumpkin-shaped Cinderella-style glass carriage pulled by six plumed white horses, followed by stretch limousines worth half a million.

7. Nero and Pythagoras (~ 65 A.D.)

Cost: 25,000 Denarii

In a fallow period between luckless wives, Emperor Nero married a young Greek slave-boy, Pythagoras, in a traditional Roman ceremony with rings and flame-colored veil. The festivities were accompanied by Tiberian pleasure-boats stuffed with exotic animals, feasting, singing, and “high-born” prostitutes. According to the historian Tacitus, the emperor took the woman’s part in the ceremonies.

8. Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas (Nov 18, 2000)

Cost: £1.5 million

The actress, who was born on a housing estate in the Welsh village of Mumbles, married Hollywood leading man Douglas amid lush festivities at New York’s famous Plaza Hotel. The aftermath of the wedding was even more fantastic than the celebrations themselves. Despite the high security, photographers from *Hello! Magazine* gate crashed the event and took surreptitious pictures.

9. Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer (July 29, 1981)

Cost: undisclosed

A global audience of 750 million viewers tuned in to watch the heir to the throne wed a blushing 20-year-old former children’s nanny - the largest viewing figures recorded in television history. The royal couple married in St Paul’s Cathedral, with Diana in a dress of antique lace with a 25 ft. train, as crowds of 60,000 flocked to catch a glimpse of the newlyweds on a British national holiday. Stylishly flaunting royal protocol, the couple stole a kiss on the balcony - an image which remains iconic despite the shattering of this fairytale marriage over years of messy divorce, infidelity, and tragedy.

from Times Archive, 1981: Wedding of Charles and Diana

Cartoon circulating through electronic mails:

