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Metro's John Flores, vacationing in London, snapped this close-up of Queen Elizabeth greeting subjects outside of St. Paul's Cathedral.



## Metro's John Flores remembers his moment with Elizabeth II

- From La Puente to London and a Chat with the Queen of England

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 20, 2006) It was a last-minute shopping trip that, for Metro's John Flores, turned out to be the biggest thrill of a three-week European vacation. He met the Queen of England.

After beginning his vacation in London, then spending a week in Madrid and a week in Barcelona, Flores and his friend, Vladimir Martinez, were spending a last couple of days back in London before flying home.

While Martinez – who uses a wheelchair – rested at their Piccadilly Circus hotel, the 30-year-old Building Services clerk headed off the morning of June 15 to buy some souvenirs at St. Paul's Cathedral.

It was about 10 a.m. and the streets around the cathedral were blocked. Noticing that some people were dressed for church, Flores was told the queen would be coming to the cathedral for a service that would be a prelude to her official 80th birthday celebration the following Saturday, June 17.

At that moment, he saw a limousine drive by with former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. That's when Flores decided this was too good an opportunity to miss.



Metro's John Flores rests on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.



Prince Charles, left, says a word to his father, Prince Phillip, as princes Harry and William follow.

**An impressive scene**

He plunged into the crowd around the entrance to St. Paul’s and wormed his way to the front, seeking a good camera angle. It was an impressive scene as soldiers in ceremonial dress lined the steps up to the cathedral’s massive stone pillars.

Soon, a large tour bus pulled up and people Flores assumed were part of the royal family stepped out and walked into the church. More limousines arrived with the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, and his sons, princes William and Harry.



Soldiers of the Household Cavalry march to their places on the steps of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Flores was snapping photos as fast as he could when a burgundy Bentley drove slowly up and Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, stepped out and walked up the steps of the church.

Flores spent the next hour jockeying for what he hoped would be a

better vantage point for photos. He wound up near a group of media in what turned out to be his lucky spot.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip greet their subjects and tourists outside the cathedral as plainclothes security officers look on.



Around noon, the doors of the cathedral opened and members of the royal family began to exit. People he didn't recognize, then Prince Charles, William, Harry and some others. People near Flores were whispering about whether the queen would make a "walkabout."

Then out she came, Queen Elizabeth II, dressed in a peach-colored sheath with a lace-edged spring coat and wearing a large hat with a white feather. She was trailed by the Duke of Edinburgh, and shadowed by a phalanx of stern-faced security officers in civilian dress.

Flores was snapping photos as the queen slowly worked her way along the row of foreign tourists and British subjects, chatting with some and receiving flowers from others.

#### **'She came up to me'**

"She kept coming and coming," he recalls. "And she came up to me and smiled."

"I said, 'Hello, Your Majesty. Congratulations.' She smiled and said, 'It's a lovely day, isn't it?' Her smile was so bright."

"I said, 'Yes, it is and I came all the way from Los Angeles to see you.' She said, 'Thank you,' and I thought to myself, 'How do I get to meet royalty?'"

After speaking to only one more person in the crowd, the queen and her consort stepped into their waiting car and drove away.

"It didn't hit me until afterward," says Flores, "that – wow! – I met the queen."

Then, John Flores, an ordinary guy from La Puente who on a summers' day in London met Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, thinks and says, "This will be something to tell my grandchildren!"

**More about Queen Elizabeth II**

Queen Elizabeth II was born April 21, 1926 as Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, daughter of King George VI and the Queen Mother Elizabeth.

She ascended to the throne on Feb. 6, 1952, following the death of her father. She was crowned on June 2, 1953.

Although born in April, the queen officially celebrates her birthday on a Saturday in June. The official celebrations in 2006 included a service at St. Paul's Cathedral, June 15, and the "Trooping the Color" on June 17.

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