

At the end of this most-remarkable Talossan Independence Day, Oraclâ reflects with Gödefrieu Válcadác'h...

Oraclâ: Well-well, Gödefrieu, you must be on cloud-nine right now.

Gödefrieu Válcadác'h: Yes, but in a sad way for my Republic fellows who came to the Republic after 1 June 2004 and who have never ever known Talossan life as anything but republicans in a very small but tight-knit community... If re/unification comes around, it will be toughest on them. But I think this is the right way to go. We have to think of the future, and Talossa is far-better-off as one state instead of two states perpetually at war with one-another.

O: This move, then, on the Republic's government is based on pragmatism as much as anything?

GV: I think so. And really, we in the Republic have done what we set out to do. In the face of the tyranny of Ben Madison, we stood strong as a viable alternative in which someone could come and do Talossa in a place that was safe and in which someone would not be looking into your public records and fabricating malicious lies from same just to get you kicked out.

Shenanigans like what Ben Madison pulled have real-world consequences. This is part of what got us so incensed and why there was so much bitterness.

O: And with Ben and Amy gone, you guys can make a triumphal return to the Kingdom with your heads held high?

GV: *Heads held high?* You bet. *Triumphal?* Absolutely. *Return?* Not really.

Kane sometime ago said to me (it's in an old Oraclâ no. 60-something) that one cannot return to things as they were on 31 May 2004, which is the great mistake my Blue Wave Party made. Instead of my keeping a mindset of moving forward to a Talossa that could be in the future, I was gunning for a 'return' to the Talossa in the past that Should-Have-Been, a Talossa that never existed and that now never will.

And this week, I've really come to the realization of the importance of the Table of Abbavilla. It gave Ben and everyone a clear and defined chance and opportunity to bring their cases forward in the hope that then Kingdom PM QC could arbitrate, if you will, some sort of reapproachment. Had Ben come clean with everything, I think things could have been smoothed-over.

M-P Furxheir and I brought our 'statements' to the Table while everyone else (Kane, especially) waited for Ben to do likewise. However, it was not to be. Everyone was looking for a specific statement from the King addressing the spurious charges against Kane. But once it was clear that Ben was not going to budge, the last chance to salvage

the old Talossa was gone.

O: But let's imagine for a moment, the Table did turn out differently, Ben laid out his 'case' against Gruber, Gruber comes back and says this and easily blows Ben out of the water, Ben gets a fit of contrition, and the apologies flow from him left and right, etc. 1 June 2004 does not end up happening, and all goes as it was.

GV: The coming cataclysm was inevitable. The spurious accusations against Kane came at the near-tail-end of months of feuding which came at the tail end of years of building resentment and doubt about Ben's sanity where Talossa was concerned. The Liberals had not been forgotten. Penguinia was on everyone's mind, still (Ben saw to that), and there was building a slow powderkeg that was waiting to explode.

If the Table had succeeded and the domestic-violence junk de-fused, something else would have come up on the heels of doubts on everyone's part about Ben's sincerity.

Look, Ben was on shaky ground with driving people off for years and years, and everyone knew he had issues where Talossa was concerned: namely that he valued it above everything else and pretty-much everyone else in his life save his wife and immediate family. He did not work that much, and everyone knew he at his best was linguistics-professor material. The guy should have been tenured somewhere like his father. He has the brains to get it done. And everyone knows it.

The situation in Talossa was terribly-unstable, and Ben was the cause of it. Phil Ledgerwood. Charles Sauls. Jack Schneider. Dan Wardlow. Ián Anglatzarâ. Béiâ Cruciani. The list goes on and on...

O: But didn't Ben drive away Davron?

GV: No, and that was an entirely-different situation. Ron and David really *were* a thorn in Talossa's side. David forged an electoral ballot at least the once and was a nefarious political back-stabber. Ron was his right-hand man.

Davron simply got tired and moved on with real life.

O: But to keep on this subject a bit more, wasn't Ron allowed back into the Kingdom ca. 2000? If he was so bad, why the re-entry approval?

GV: All sources and people who remember them point to David as the real villain in that little scuffle. And in 2000, we gave Ron the benefit of a doubt as to years of real life perhaps maturing him somewhat.

And without David there to egg him on, Ron was a mostly-decent (if not still somewhat erratic) citizen the second time around, though I think he did do some flip-flopping politically. To his credit, in the days following our mass-exodus, he was the

one person in the Kingdom who actually spoke up for us. He later defected and joined the Republic, but vanished into somewhere some time after that. We haven't heard from him in years.

O: But to bring things back to topic, Ben was very good at ferreting out jerks.

GV: Yes, but he also ferreted out people who did not fit his narrow view of what was decent. JKK, formerly derided as the 'Greek God Guy', was called out for his religious views. Ben had a horrible time discerning virtue from internet posts, which is usually something that is not that difficult to do, provided one has enough posts and gristle to go on.

And from what I can tell, JKK gave us enough gristle.

O: But that's just it: no-one else in Talossa was on JKK's side. Right?

GV: That's just it. Ben Madison has a singular gift, in-person and online to exude a real charm and charisma. It's very easy to fall under his spell, and I certainly did that for a long time. It was not until Black Tuesday with Coop's and Art's renunciations that I was finally free of the Cult of Tolerance surrounding Ben. It was the day I finally grew up in Talossa and grew up a little in Real Life, too.

O: You've spoken of the Cult of Tolerance before. You spoke of it in 'A Nation Sundered'. What *is* it, exactly?

GV: It was a combination of giving Ben the benefit of a doubt given long-standing friendship, his status as Talossa's Founder, and a vain hope on the part of long-time friends that he would grow up a little. At his best, our Ben is really a very-likable character. He is witty. He is articulate. He is funny. He knows lots of history and can talk with you about almost anything. One *wants* him to be correct. One *wants* him to be right. One *wants desperately* for the colorful story of Ár Päts to be what really happened, the whole thing just seems so cool and crazy and quirky.

Look, for years I really thought the Liberals just didn't *get it* about Talossa. I looked at them wanting to turn the place into a politically-correct republic where the tone of one's speech was more-important than the substance where in-fact, both are important. I had not yet learned that people of differing political persuasions could both be virtuous on that deeper level, and that that while God may be Lord of all, the earth was a grayer place.

Oh, yes, there are absolute ways in which to live one's life: don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, don't murder, don't embezzle, etc., but the rich irony of the conservative interpretation of holy scripture relating to the end-time is that the millennial reign of Christ is, in fact, a theocratic, totalitarian, and communist dictatorship.

But another rich irony is that while Jesus may be the ultimate communist, with people, there is for every Snowball a Napoleon who raises puppies. Russia and China have found this out the hard way. No, I am still a capitalist, though with a healthy dose of labor-union and government intervention, though I could go on like that forever.

To get back on-topic, pretty much anyone that did not agree with Ben on matters of religion or politics was to him a reprobate deserving his eternal scorn. Phil Ledgerwood found that out the hard way.

O: Why, then, did Ben get along so well with JJ and Mike P.?

GV: They agreed with him on Talossan matters. And in JJ's case, there were decades of real-life interaction to go on. Mike did not have that luxury, and once he parted from Ben on Talossan politics related to Kane Gruber in a major way 2003-2004, that was it for their friendship.

O: Kane. It all went pear-shaped at TalossaFest 2003, didn't it?

GV: I arrive in Milwaukee in July 2003 and step off the bus, having gotten to Mitchell Field from Chicago O'Hare. If memory serves, Ben and Andy Lowry pick me up from the airport.

We arrive at Ben and Amy's house (not Vuode Palace) to meet Amy, Kane/Chris, and Tomás there. We walk into the living room. I fully expect a huge bear-hug from Kane, but all I get is a shrug-hug and a scowl on Gruber's visage having nothing to do with me. Amy had a look of great annoyance, and I sense the mood is not good.

Clearly, Amy and Kane had just met. And it had not gone well.

It would go downhill from there.

O: Two personalities that could never - ever - get along.

GV: Two bigger-than-life mouths that both wanted to be the center of conversations and could not stand that the other was in the room, perhaps.

O: Oil and water. Temper and Wrath. Your headings in 'A Nation Sundered'.

GV: I think that was pretty-much it. There were a lot of weird dynamics at work. Kane was so exited at being in Milwaukee/Talossa for the first time he was just plain silly. Instances of seeming rudeness to Lisa, his wife, were, if you knew Kane, his weird sense of humor.

I just can't say it other than Ben/Amy's way of doing things were at complete odds with how Kane comported himself. Kane was fine with everyone else, but at times he

really did come as abrasive, rude, and crude. But he never meant to be any of those things, nor does he now -- unless you reeeeeally give him a good reason.

There was simply no way the 'Madison-Durnford Arrangement' and Gruber were ever going to mesh in-person. And if you know Amy at all, you know her to be a talkative juggernaut that will not be stopped.

But for a long time, I thought Amy was great. She was getting Ben a more well-rounded look at the world (which caused me to note my somewhat-lack-of-same). I thought she was a very good thing to have happened to Ben. It was only after her treatment of Kane that my opinion of her changed.

And for the record, I wish her well. I want her and Ben both to be happy, well, and content. While I will fight to my dying day any attempt to bring them back into Talossa, I don't hate them. I don't revile them. We always got along very well, and should I ever run into them again, I think our conversation would be very civil.

I will never forget how gracious Ben and Amy were to me in my two trips there.

Nevertheless, I will take the sleaze of Davron over the sleaze of Ben Madison digging for 'dirt' on Gruber to get him thrown out of Talossa. Unbelievable!!

O: But to bring things back, if 1 June 2004 had not happened, what would Talossa's fate have been?

GV: The better question to ask is what would have happened if Gruber had not provided them a cover for which to enact their nefarious scheme.

[Gödafrüeu:]>> The healing has already begun. But it is my humble opinion that the chief problem in this is that you and Chris Gruber cannot get along.

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[Ben:]> Then Chris should leave. It would be good for everybody.

Hey - Ben. Maybe you should do what your mother did all these years ago.

- from **Poor Ben Madison. He just doesn't get it. (Witt X 7683)**, posted by **Retroradio Gruber** on December 28, 2003 - 05:50

It is public knowledge that Ben's mother passed away in her sleep in 1979, several months before Talossa's founding.

O: The most-vicious insult in the history of Talossa! Deplorable.

GV: Without question. It was so bad that I turned to Ben's side of things right then and there. It is a testament to Ben's nuttiness that he found a way for me to go right back to Gruber's camp and stay there permanently.

Ben and Amy decided in a fit of paranoia to check out Kane's public criminal record

and see if there was anything they could use to support the Insult as being what it surely a had to have been: a direct threat to Ben's life.

It's funny that no-one else in Talossa saw that dire insult as anything more than...an insult. But again, we digress. It's so easy to go on tangents talking about Talossa.

O: All-too-easy.

But let's get back to your talking about the years of pent-up resentment and anger with Ben over all sorts of things. And Ben's reaction to the Table of Abbavilla...

GV: ...which consisted solely of his Støtanneu article from autumn 2003 (well-before the Insult was hurled) in which he goes into rich detail how the evil Gruber backstabbed him re the Joint Statement between his Grey Congress Party and Ben's Black Hand when it is a proven fact the 'backstabbing' was an honest communications snafu Tomás pulled off.

In his 'statement' to the Table, Ben references that article...and that's it!! Nothing else. No mention of the spurious charges against Kane and how Kane's continued custody of his son blows any concern about domestic violence out of the water... No concern or care for his subjects in Talossa... Oy, veh - I could go on and on.

Look, if the Insult had not happened, there would be no false charges, etc. And no Lisagate. No Black Tuesday.

But all those things, or events similar to them, or events with at least the same spirit of utter poison would have taken place one way or another. It was just a matter of time.

With every mass-exodus, with every Phil Ledgerwood, with every Charles Sauls, Talossa was inching closer and closer to such an oblivion even Ben's closest friends would have given up on him in doing Talossa, eventually leaving him as a Talossan community of one when he could have had the internet, geekdom, and the entire world knocking on his door.

When one has that much opportunity for friendship and camaraderie, how could one ever go back to 1979 and being all by himself? Yet, if I know Ben at all, I know him to be such a person who, in order to never lose, would have rather lost all the non-immediate-family people in his life.

a pity for him... a pity for us... a pity for Ben's family... a pity for the world...

O: You still hold onto the hope of the Talossa that never could have been, don't you?

GV: I look back and see what Ben could have done with Talossa. And it's all-too-easy to despair.

But at the same time, I look at all the miracles that have happened.

One thing Ben was very good at was attracting dynamic and bright people around him. Of course, he drove half of them off and the other half to complete apathy, but that's another story.

Enough of these dynamic and bright people saw the output of Ben's creative genius and saw the best parts of the make-believe country we all wish we had where government was truly honest, laws were really fair, and copyright is not enforced too severely as to snuff out creative expression.

We all want that sort of country. At its best Talossa is a vehicle for such a place, even if it ultimately exists only in our minds and not *de jure* or *de facto* in any tangible sense.

And when I wallow in What Might Have Been, I do my fellow Talossans and myself a great disservice. By seeing only the past, I am blind to the future and the future of what Talossa, in the full plane of reality, could be.

After everything that has happened, Talossa still exists. Talossa is still mostly-thriving, and there are enough people to keep things going for new people to come and contribute for years to come. Now, the Kingdom will get back a lot of its old institutional memory.

O: And that is something that has not been talked about. What about Ben's expatriate community of people with institutional memory? Why don't we get them back into Talossa?

GV: A united Talossa will be a far-greater pull than having to choose sides in the stupid cold war between Kingdom and Republic, which indeed has been bitter at times. There are a lot of great people I'd love to see make a return, even as only a nominal voter.

This is a huge reason alone for people to get fully-behind our efforts at getting a union together. It's a win-win for the entire people of Talossa.

O: For one thing, prospectives will no longer be divided by joining the Kingdom or joining the Republic. There will now be just the Kingdom.

GV: Very true. The republican aspect of Talossan history will end...for now. ;-) But we will be entering or re-entering a Kingdom that is more-democratic than it ever has been before. No matter how long he reigns, John Woolley will never have the breadth of influence Ben had. There is too much immigration of independent-minded folks. Plus, John is not the Founder. And his history of Talossa only goes back a few years - as does the history of about three-quarters of active Talossans today! And that brings up another very-critical point: we old-timers will be able to give our

institutional knowledge to the next generation as well as really bringing them into our collective and shared history.

Besides, my own Talossan history is only five years longer than John's! lol

O: What is next in the chain of events for both sides? What about these seemingly-minor details that need to be worked-out?

GV: The talks are on-going and confidential. I really do not have the liberty to discuss them. Both sides can rest easy in that their views and concerns will be heard and well-represented by the very-capable people in the six-person group ironing things out.

This much I can see to your first question. The talks will continue to take place with the committee issuing a statement of This-is-How-the-Return-will-Proceed. The two countries will have their chances to vote such up or down, and we will go on from there.

O: How long do you think these negotiations will last?

GV: There will not be a lot going on before New Year's, for sure. And with at least one member being busy in real-life through January, things may be delayed a bit.

If all goes well, we could have something from them concrete in our hands by the end of February, but anything could happen, and we could have something by next week. Who knows?

O: 'next week' and 'end of February' are two very-different things.

GV: Yes, but that is as detailed an analysis of how things are going as I can provide. I will trust in John and Miestrâ and all angels to keep us informed. I just cannot say anything on this public medium, however. Sorry.

O: The committee issues its 'statement' or whatever, the people vote up or down, the vote on both sides is 'up'. When could the Return happen?

GV: Good question. There will be many details logistically to be ironed-out. The Return could happen as early as six weeks from now or by the latter part of this year. I just cannot be sure of things yet except to say I'm pretty sure 2012 will see a final resolution of this question one way or the other.

O: And if the vote on one side or the other, or both, is 'down'?

GV: The consequences for Talossa short-term and long-term are too ghastly to discuss.

O: Perhaps we should give the people that scenario. What if negotiations break down,

and both sides are unable to come up with a scheme to make the Return happen?

Talossans go their separate ways in perpetually-warring camps, never speaking to one another again?

GV: That's exactly what would happen. We would be forever divided with little or no hope of ever mending the chasm. Both sides would consign themselves to eternal bitterness. No-one would really win.

O: Do you think it could happen? This breaking-down of negotiations?

GV: It is a possibility, however slight. If there are issues deadlocking the process, those who raise up those issues need to concern themselves with the price of sticking to their guns compared with the price of real compromise.

Sometimes, compromise is a good thing.

And one thing we must remember: if Talossa stays apart, Ben Madison's will is done. If he is now aware of what's happening, rest assured he *wants* us to fail.

O: Thanks so much for talking - time for you to get some shut-eye.

GV: That I will do. Thanks as always.

