

Chapter 5 : “Dangerous liaisons”

The love life of the royal children was governed by the long time outdated §5 and §6 of the 1810 laws of succession:

§5. The prince and princess of the royal house may not marry, without consent of the government and at the request of the King. If they do, he or she has forfeited their royal prerogatives for themselves, their children and descendants. Same, if he or she, with or without consent, marries a commoner.

§6. Princesses of the royal house may not enter into marriage without the King's knowledge and consent.

The law was interpreted as meaning that it was not enough for the royal house to marry nobles but the bride or groom had to be royal or close. The law did not provide for any punishment beyond the loss of succession rights, but the consequences were tightened over time to the loss of the titles, orders, appanage, passports and to be excluded from the family. As the royal house lost its power, it was felt important to emphasize ancestry and respectability.

The sons of Oscar II: In 1888, Prince Oscar married the Ebba Munck, a lowly noblewoman. He lost his place in the succession, but was allowed to keep his title as it was considered a personal birthright. (As a result, his son Folke Bernadotte never became Prince.) (2) Prince Eugen remained unmarried. (He claimed that it was a contract with the father.) (3) Prince Carl jr, son of Prince Carl, married countess Elsa Rosen in 1937 and lost his succession rights and title. (However, he received a personal prince title from his brother-in-law Leopold III of Belgium; this has been interpreted as the law being loosened in 1937 but that is probably a misunderstanding.¹)

The sons of Gustaf V: Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden married Lady Louise Mountbatten of England after the death of his first wife. Born von Battenberg, she, like the rest of the family after the end of World War I, anglicized her name to Mountbatten and renounced her princess title to become a marquess, a title in rank between Count and Duke. The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a genealogical inquiry conducted to silence the protests against the marriage.² (2) The heir prince Wilhelm, after his divorce from the Russian Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, never remarried, but cohabited 1914-1952 with the French woman Jeanne de Tramcourt, whom no one pretended existed. In 1932, his son, Prince Lennart, married the commoner Karin Nissvandt and lost his succession rights and title.

The sons of Gustaf VI: (1) In 1934, Prince Sigvard married Erica Patzek, a German citizen, and lost his succession rights title. (2) Prince Bertil remained for a long time unmarried. (According to his own explanation, out of a sense duty.) He cohabited with the English woman Lilian Craig, whom no one pretended to exist. When they married in 1976, the rules of the line of succession had changed, so he was allowed to retain his title and she was given a personal princess title. (3) In 1946, Prince Carl Johan married Kjerstin Wijkmark and lost his succession rights and title. Both

¹ Tronföljden. Vecko Journalen, 1947:7.

² Erik Lindorm. Ny svensk historia: Gustaf V och hans tid 1919-1927. 1979, s 240.

Sigvard and Carl Johan married abroad because Gustaf V did not approve. Whether or not the royal marriage ban was legal escapes my judgment. The priests were officials of the State Church of Sweden, so perhaps they had to join the ranks.

In 1951, King Gustaf VI announced that Sigvard, Carl Johan and Lennart with wives and descendants through King Leopold III of Belgium were awarded the titles of Count or Countess of Wisborg. The title quarrel seems to have degenerated into a family quarrel in connection with Gustaf VI's funeral in 1973 so that Prince Bertil wanted to prohibit his two brothers Sigvard and Carl Johan from accompanying their father's coffin to the last rest since they no longer belonged to the Royal House. Sigvard later tried to regain his prince title. Carl Johan thought Sigvard should abstain and quoted with approval his wife's comment: "You should never cry over spilt milk. Especially if you spilled it yourself."

Most of the above took place before CG came to the world. Sigvard Bernadotte, for example, lost his title by a government decision in 1934.³ CG had personal experience of Prince Bertil's relationship with Lilian Craig (born Davies), Princess Margaretha's affair with the Scottish nobleman Robin Douglas-Home, and his uncles' bourgeois marriages. Gustaf VI's non-flattering role in all three cases was obviously a wake-up call. But to the point...

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During Gustaf VI's reign, Sweden had two deputy kings, his uncle Prince Wilhem (1884-1965) and his son Prince Bertil (1912-1997). Before the war, Prince Bertil had two relationships with the officer daughter Margareta Tengbom (1914-2002) and the daughter of a Finnish businessman Antoinette Decker (1910-1989). Prince Bertil was in both cases sent abroad to get over it.⁴ During the war he worked as a naval attaché in London. He then met the model and singer Lilian Craig (1915-2013) with whom he began a relationship in 1943. The relationship has been portrayed in Prince Bertil's memoirs: "Prince Bertil tells it all" from 1983 and in two biographies: Fabian af Petersén "Prince Bertil : A Life" from 1992 and Princess Lilian, Omar Magnergård & Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg "My life with prins Bertil" from 2000, without revealing too many details. The additional information presented below is based on a genealogy by Ted Rosvall⁵, interviews and "incidental findings" from a number of sources.

Lilian (Lillian) May Davies (born 30 August 1915) was the daughter of warehouse worker William John Davies (1892-1956) and business assistant Gladys Mary Curran (1895-1942). Lilian was born in Swansea, Wales. The marriage was concluded in April 1915 while his father was called up for military service. His parents separated in the early 1920s but did not divorce until 1939. The reason for the delay was the legislation. Until 1937, long-term separation was not a valid reason for dissolving the marriage. After 1937, the marriage could be dissolved if the separation lasted for three years and if the marriage was not resumed within two years after one party filed for divorce. Gladys remarried with bookkeeper Harold Powlson. Also her father remarried and Lilian has two half-sisters with whom she had no contact.⁶

³ Bengt Ljungqvist. Hovet om Sigvard Bernadottes anspråk på prinstiteln: Kungen ändrar sig aldrig. Dagens Nyheter, 2001-05-26.

⁴ Fabian af Peterséns. Prins Bertil : Ett liv. 1992.

⁵ Ted Rosvall. Bernadotteättlingar. Rosvall Royal Books, 1992.

⁶ Georg Cederskog. Prinsessan Lilian - en askungesaga. Expressen, 1997-04-06.

The home in Swansea, they lived with their grandparents, was poor but decent. Lilian attended a seven-year primary school and then helped out at home. She felt unhappy in Swansea, a small, dirty and ugly mining community. "Rarely did I experience any joy or anything positive."⁷ Sometime in 1931-1935, in 1933 seems most likely, she moved to London where she attended a private theatre school for a Mrs. Winsborough. After that, she found work at a modelling agency and appeared in fashion magazines such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. The assignments consisted of showing hats, gloves and other accessories. She appeared in commercials and had television roles. She toured in plays, variety shows and ballets. Sometimes she sang. Her voice was melodic if weak. She was not a great artist, but she was very beautiful, reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich or Veronica Lake, and was fun company. "There was something special about her already as a child. They all looked very good in the family. But Lilian was especially beautiful. We used to tease her for her funny nose but she had a kind ethereal fairy like aura - a quality that made her always stand out from the crowd".⁸ In addition to this, Lilian is said to have been nightclub hostess with the task of dancing with the gentlemen and getting them to order more champagne.

Until the outbreak of the war, she kept in contact with her mother's relatives in Swansea and helped them when she could. She avoided her father. He visited her several times but was told she was away. She was well off, for a time she supported her mother, but at the outbreak of the war both the entertainment and fashion industry collapsed. In the dining room at Villa Solbacken there is a drawing depicting the 24-year-old Lilian with dark blond hair and violet blue eyes. Still in 1990, Lilian sighed when recalling the memory. She was so totally without a future when the drawing was made. "I have sad eyes, but I didn't have much to laugh about then." She moved in with her step aunt nurse Winifred "Auntie" McLeod (?-1976). In September 1940, she married the Scottish actor Ivan Craig (1912-1995). Two months later, Craig was ordered to North Africa. They probably got married to give Lilian a secure living. Craig had a captain's rank and the family maintenance was generous. However, I have not been able to verify his military track record.

During the war, women had civic duties. Lilian worked six months assembling radios for the merchant navy. It was too heavy work for her, and in 1941 she switched to East Grinstead Hospital, where she worked on rehabilitation of war invalids. Read cheer up the patients, mostly burned pilots. In 1942, her mother died of cancer. August 30, 1943, she turned 28 and met Prince Bertil at a cocktail party. Prince Bertil was smitten: "She was so beautiful, I had never seen anything more beautiful in my whole life! She was also nice and had a sense of humour." They socialized and after a while she moved in with him. It has been discussed - year after year - how it actually happened - Lilian has told many versions - but it seems to have been because the war temporarily dissolved the class barriers. With peace they returned with full force.

With peace, Ivan Craig also returned. He had found a new partner. Lilian filed for divorce in November 1945, which came into effect in November 1947. She felt her financial situation was so uncertain that Prince Bertil allegedly bought the villa "Les Mirages" on the Riviera in her name as proof that the relationship between them really existed. Before the divorce came into effect, Edmund died in a plane crash and Prince Bertil annulled his marriage plans.

⁷ Prinsessan Lilian, Omar Magnergård & Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg. Mitt liv med prins Bertil. Ekerlids förlag, 2000.

⁸ Christel Persson. Från hamnstadens fattigkvarter i Wales till de kungliga gemaken i Stockholm. Expressen, 1997-04-06. [Intervju med en ingift släkting i en lokaltidning i Swansea omkring 1976-12-07.]

However, there are rumours that they were married in Paris by the Swedish consul, Raoul Nordling.⁹

Lilian was supported by Prince Bertil but she took modelling jobs for extra money. She travelled between Stockholm, London and the Riviera. "Auntie" came along as a companion. Prince Bertil paid the rent: One apartment on Styrmansgatan in Östermalm. One in Mayfair. Through her actress friend Kay Kendall (1926-1959), Lilian and Bertil were often guests at various parties in London's artistic circles. Kay and Lilian had some similarities. Kay is usually described as a kind of modernized and Europeanized version of the American crazy broads from the 1930s, think Carole Lombard. After the war, Craig enjoyed success as an actor in low-budget films and television. He also owned a chain of laundry facilities.

Lilian was also courted by others. In April 1947, American actor and tenor Howard Keel was in London for a production of "Oklahoma". Keel had a similar background as Lilian. He was the son of a miner and had had a bad childhood with a drunk father and a strict religious mother who forbade her children all kinds of pleasure. Lilian used to visit him in his apartment to help him out with cooking and the like. Keel was recently divorced and actually proposed to her. "But then Lilian became very hesitant and reserved... yes, even afraid. – In the end she admitted to me that there could never be anything between us, says Howard. Lilian said she was deeply in love and belonged to another man. Crying, she also told her that the man of her heart belonged to a European royal house and that his family did not allow their love."¹⁰

Craig always described Lilian as his "Pocket-Dietrich". Her best Swedish friend Sickan Carlsson described her as follows: "The first time I met Lilian was with Karin Ekelund and Ragnar Sachs over thirty years ago - I think it was already 1946. They had already told me about her, yet I was totally struck by her beauty when she entered the room by the Prince's arm. A small Meissen doll [158 cm] in a black chiffon dress, so thin and brittle that she almost seemed ethereal."¹¹ Sickan soon discovered, however, that the little Meissen doll's favourite dish was turnip mash and pork rinsed with beer. She also liked cabbage rolles, sailor steak and her homeland's kidney pies.

Initially Lilian and Bertil met abroad and mainly during the long holidays: Christmas and Easter and the industrial holidays. The reason for the secrecy was that Prince Bertil did not want this relationship to suffer the same fate as those before the war where his father had played an anything but honourable role as a henchman for King Gustaf V. At a meeting with journalist's shortly after the war, Bertil appealed to them to leave them alone. Carl Adam Nycop, editor-in-chief at Expressen, recalls it as: "As many of you probably know, I have a friend named Lilian Craig. I would be very grateful if you would respect her integrity. You can do us the favour of not dragging us around in the columns."¹² Indiscreet court employees were dismissed.¹³ It was actually 10 years before Gustaf VI learned of the relationship existing. It seems to have been due to Princess Margaretha's affair with Robin Douglas-Home when King Gustaf VI followed the English gossip. The first report on the relationship appears to have been published in 1953. In an unnoticed place though. Photographs of them were also published, but not in Swedish newspapers. The first photograph was from the 1948 London Olympics.

⁹ Cecilia Hagen. Deras kärlek besegrade allt. Expressen, 1997-01-07.

¹⁰ Hänt i Veckan, 1983:47. [Intervju med Howard Keel.]

¹¹ Sickan Carlsson & Anna Nyman. Dockan : minnen. 1977.

¹² Fabian af Peterséns. Prins Bertil : Ett liv. 1992.

¹³ Karl-Gunnar Bäck. Stockholms slott, del 3. Slottets prinsar aldrig hemma. Året Runt, 1963:41.

The Swedish self-censorship looked like this: In 1956 the photographer Len Waernberg from Filmjournalen accidentally met Prince Bertil in Paris accompanied by an unknown woman and took some pictures before the couple could protest. Although the editors at home did not know who she was, they still considered the images too sensitive to be published. Even Vecko Journalen and SE declined. They were later published abroad in the English Last Night's News. There, one knew who Lilian was but not much more, only that she was divorced and had worked as a showgirl.¹⁴

Lilian saw herself in the same position as the divorced millionaire Wallis Simpson and read everything she found about her and the Duke of Windsor. Mrs. Simpson got her prince and Lilian hoped for the same. Although it was hard on the nerves. She once packed Prince Bertil's bag, threw it outside the door and cried: "To hell with you and your crown!"¹⁵ The hounding of Wallis Simpson by the media was so protracted and malevolent that it probably explains Lilian's silence and low profile. When Kay married in 1957 – she and Lilian seem to have shared the Mayfair apartment – Lilian moved to Stockholm on a more permanent basis. She and Prince Bertil seem however, to have had separate addresses until 1967 when she moved in for good in his villa Solbacken on Djurgården as "private hostess".

By the way, it was then [1967] that one of our men's magazines pressed Prince Bertil for "the truth about Lilian Craig". He got slightly annoyed and said: - I'm almost 60 years old and I'm going steady with whoever I want.¹⁶

As a private hostess, Lilian had to have a kitchen maid. The security police selected Aina Nellberg who, together with her husband, a retired military officer, installed herself in a service residence on the property. The man was supposed to be the overseer of the villa when the prince couple was away. Lilian insisted on special rules to inculcate the subordinate position of the kitchen maid. For example, she was not allowed to eat the same food as the prince couple: Biff and sole for the gentry. Left overs for the servants. Complaints were brushed aside that this was part of the job. It was an honour to work for the prince couple. The service accommodation was so valued that the cash salary was almost symbolic. The court opposed trade unions. The employees therefore had no contract with AMF insurances, so the pension was also symbolic. To cut a long story short, Nellberg slipped on an ice patch in 1970 while walking the dogs and injured her back. After spending a week in bed, Lilian showed up and accused her of feigning at work. "- I got so mad, says Aina, that despite the pain I jumped out of bed, grabbed Mrs. Craig, turned her around and literally kicked her out of my residence. - Perhaps I am the only person in the world who has kicked a future princess in the behind, laughs Aina."¹⁷

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It is possible to describe in some detail how Lilian was accepted by the royal house. The first accomplice was Prince Wilhelm who had had similar problems and he seems to have helped Prince Bertil to present Lilian to King Gustaf VI and Queen Louise, which took place on neutral ground, in Copenhagen at Queen Ingrid in July 1960. This led to a private visit to

¹⁴ Husmodern, 1976:46.

¹⁵ Fabian af Peterséns. Prins Bertil : ett liv. Eget förlag, 1992.

¹⁶ Svensk Damtidning, 1973:43.

¹⁷ Henry Sidoli. Hushållerska på Villa Solbacken. Hänt i Veckan, 1987:22.

Drottningholm Castle, a family dinner, probably in 1961, where she sat between King Gustaf VI and Sibylla. Lilian arrived with the words "Finally here!" This happened without Prince Bertil, as he was bedridden with anal fistulas and a slipped disk the entire year. In 1962, she received a personal invitation to Gustaf VI's 80th birthday party. Sibylla took her to a fashion show to make her look presentable. The first Swedish mention of the relationship was in an Express interview the same year. Bertil and Lilian had too often been seen together in restaurants, theatre visits etc. for it to be ignored and Bertil's life as a self proclaimed "hermit" raised questions:

- From time to time, English Lilian Craig has appeared. English newspapers regularly claim that you [Prince Bertil] have been in love with her for 18 years, but that you promised the king not to marry her until the little crown prince comes of age.

- It is true that I have known her for many years, but we are only good friends.¹⁸

Upon Nikita Krushchev's visit in 1964, Gustav VI introduced her as his English aunt (a habit that CG later took over) but she was not allowed to attend Princess' Desirée's wedding the same year, but watched it on television. The first official image of the two was when they arrived in 1966 at Carl Johan Bernadotte's 50th birthday party. In 1968, she was featured in a longer article in VeckoJournalen, still as a good friend. "1969 Mrs. Craig hade made some minor inroads in the form of lunches at Drottningholm and the king had been to dinner at Solbacken on Djurgården. In June, she spent a week at Sofiero."¹⁹ In 1971 Lilian had in the weekly magazines advanced to the position of "life companion". In 1972, King Gustaf VI visited the couples villa "Les Mirages" and gave them permission to marry when the time was right. They were not allowed to appear together in photographs however. She was then Prince Bertil's dinner partner at one of Sibylla's official dinners, was invited to Gustaf VI's 90th birthday party where she was placed as if she were his daughter-in-law and participated in other events such as when the Spanish ambassador in Sweden married when she was placed next to Prince Rainier. In 1976 they married and Lilian became Princess of Sweden. Stubborn wins. Prince Bertil commented afterwards:

The first 15 years of our acquaintance we had more or less to sneak. We did not even dare travel together. For example, if we went to France, Lilian flew, and I went by car or train. We never dared to go out together. Couldn't go to a restaurant or a movie, to a theatre or a party. We simply had to take account of the moral perception and etiquette of the time. Now it's quite different.²⁰

In recent years Lilian has often accompanied me on my industrial trips. She usually provides me with funny stories that I can use in different contexts, and in addition she has a curious ability to be able to ease the mood when the rest of us feel tired and depressed.

After a busy day in Kuala Lumpur [1978] we would go down to the hotel dining room to eat. But down there was disco dancing to music that was about to blow us across the wall.

"Let's go somewhere else," I said.

"Nope," said Lilian. "We will dance!"

¹⁸ Gösta Ollén. "Monarki eller republik? Det beror på hur vi sköter jobbet." Expressen, 1962-02-13.

¹⁹ Ulf Björkman. Kungens adjutant. BNL förlag AB, 1987.

²⁰ Elisabeth Reich. Om prins Bertil och Lilian Craig. Allers, 1976:50.

She got the whole delegation to join her. The floor was newly waxed, so they took off their shoes. And soon the Swedes swirled about, fit as fiddles. I was the only one who was content to watch. But even that felt stimulating.²¹

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Over the years, so many versions of Lilian's early life and how she came to meet Prince Bertil have been published that it is most likely that she made fun of the journalists by inventing them. The lack of reliable journalism has meant that she is rather anonymous. Her only known character traits are joking, being good at risqué stories and loving gossip, entertainment literature and film - her greatest interest. When Bertil was at some official event, she used to go to the 9-11 movies because that's when he came home. Later it became soap operas like *Sunset Beach*. The long stays on the Riviera meant that she spoke good French. Her Swedish was bad however, since she and Bertil spoke English in private. She adopted Prince Bertil's interests: Driving, sailing, golf and cooking. Like Prince Bertil, she was good at whistling and they used it to entertain the guests.

From the beginning of the 1950s, Lilian attended private parties and they also gave parties at villa Solbacken. On these occasions it was common to play dress games and live charades. "Both Prince Bertil and Lilian love hands-on and practical jokes. They like theatrics and love to dress up. For years it was a family joke that Lilian on the Prince's birthday would come running out of a giant cake as a surprise at the birthday party. And when good friends gave dinner the other year, Lilian and the Prince served as butler and maid."²² - "With her fine combination of spontaneity, warmth, humor and not least tact, she was quickly loved by everyone who got to know her."²³ She had no official assignments, they came later after Bertil's death in 1997, but she always accepted cocktail parties, women's events and inaugurations.

Her most famous episode was an official visit to President Reagan in 1981, when she purchased a kind of fake ketchup that was mostly red water. She was also one of the few people who could take liberties against CG. Friends: "She is a most unusual woman and the born anti-snob. She is not in the least impressed by titles. She is by nature quite a bohemian, something that the prince in his heart also is and that he loves about her."²⁴ When Prince Bertil died, Lilian could not make herself use their shared bedroom any more but slept on the sofa in the living room. Silvia moved in with a tent bed and kept her company the first time. Then Lilian slept at the castle. It took a long time for her to recover. The last time she displayed her jocular side was at the Millennium Party when she appeared wearing an extremely peculiar hooded silver space dress.

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So what should one say about this English party girl, bohemian, gold digger and charmer, now princess of Sweden? Probably the best answer is that princesses come in all sizes. Some are ambitious. Others are like the birds under the sky. They do not sow, reap, or collect in the barns, but God feeds them anyway. The secrecy surrounding the relationship has been

²¹ Prins Bertil, Bo Bengtsson, Lars Ekegren & Uno Grönkvist. Prins Bertil berättar. 1983.

²² Året Runt, 1976:48.

²³ Chris Thoen. Utomlands betraktar man dem som ett äkta par. Svensk Damtidning, 1972:14.

²⁴ Tove Elias-Nielsen. Prins Bertil och Lilian Craig. Året Runt, 1969:29.

interpreted as meaning that the royal house was ashamed of Lilian Craig and thus also of Prince Bertil. Perhaps that is the case. It is impossible to say. Gustaf VI was very grateful for her loyalty: That she, unlike Marianne Bernadotte, never objected to how she was treated.

It has since been regretted that Prince Bertil and Lilian Craig were not allowed to start a family and have children. There is information that at least Lilian so wanted.²⁵ Lilian claimed that she for a while bought baby clothes in secret and cried over them. Now it became quite a lot of money instead, 90-110 million SEK depending on how you count, and a carefree existence.

From an economic point of view, the alternative - defying Gustaf VI – would have been disaster, as the examples of the “disobedient” princes had already shown. Bertil would then have lost his yearly tax-free 180,000 kronor appanage tax-free, a hefty sum in the 1950s. He would also have lost his salary as heir prince, another 90,000 kronor. A compensation paid by the state to the 2nd in line Swedish Prince of Succession for the right to dispose of the Palace where the Foreign Ministry has its headquarters.²⁶

The children would have had a hard time anyway. Prince Bertil was an old-school officer and advocated tough measures in every possible context: Children should be brought up with slaps and beatings, juvenile offenders should get tougher punishments and car jackers and professional criminals were to be pummelled until the advantage of staying on the right side of the law was evident.^{27,28}

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Prince Bertil and his Lilian have gained much sympathy for “sacrificing” themselves for the continued existence of the monarchy. The argument has been that according to the old laws of succession §4, in the absence of an adult heir to the throne, the Parliament would appoint a regent. King Gustaf VI feared that if there was no prince available as regent, the Parliament would seize the opportunity to abolish the monarchy. It was an outspoken social democratic strategy but self-inflicted by the royal house's long-standing rejection of all forms of female succession. There was already a discussion during the war about introducing female succession but neither Gustaf V nor Gustaf VI was interested, nor when Denmark introduced cognatic succession in 1953. According to a debating book in 1968, the country would have had 40 heirs to the throne if female succession had been introduced without restrictions.²⁹ The counterargument was that if one did not take care, soon the entire population would be entitled to the throne.

²⁵ Das Neue Blatt, 1969. Citat ur: Svensk Damtidning, 1969:11.

²⁶ Fabian af Petersens. Prins Bertil. Ett liv. Bokförlaget T Fischer & Co, 1992.

²⁷ Expressen, 1969-10-26.

²⁸ Kvällsposten, 1969-03-27.

²⁹ Björn Tarras-Wahlberg & Kjell Treslow. Kan kungadömet bevaras? : ett inlägg rörande monarkins ställning, republikdebatten och författningsfrågorna. Stockholm, 1968.