

Chapter 66 : “2006/13 — Childhoods End”

On Saturday April 24, Madeleine arrived in New York and went underground – viz. lived with friends. There was a lot of writing about how bad she felt. She cancelled all her engagements and Victoria took over her attendance at the Swedish Week in Seattle. Since Madeleine by all accounts was still on her feet - meeting friends, working with Childhood's fundraising gala in Miami, vacationing in the Bahamas, etc. - she was assumed to be hiding from the journalists. CG invited Aftonbladet's and Expressens' editors-in-chief to ask them to leave her alone - especially to stop with the paparazzi. After summer some pictures were published. She looked downtrodden - overweight and carelessly dressed. But as the saying goes: “It is human to fall, diabolical to remain.” In September, Madeleine moved her tent to a second hand apartment in Manhattan and started thinking of the future. She stayed away from Sweden - probably the wisest decision she has ever taken. Her friends did their best to cheer her up. At a dinner, she met Christopher O'Neill, a financier with business in “Scandinavian circles”. Chris seemed even more private than herself. Madeleine felt immediately drawn to him. He was a good listener and had enough of upper class and “old money” to understand her life situation & humour. Chris: “It was a mutual friend who had invited a group of friends to his house on a long weekend. After that, we kept in touch and started seeing each other. Then it slowly grew, with the emphasis on slowly. In the beginning I did not know that Madeleine was a princess of Sweden. But of course I learned of it very quickly.”¹

Madeleine had an idea that moving from Sweden to New York, World Childhood Foundation and now Christopher O'Neill was her fate: “It's funny how pieces sometimes just fall into place - there's probably a meaning to everything that happens.”² The couple made no particular attempt to hide their feelings. In January 2011, a Spanish tourist filmed them on his cell phone in a restaurant. Silvia met Chris in April during a visit to New York. During the summer he was invited to Solliden. They shacked up in November the same year. October 2012 Chris proposed at a “well-chosen location in New York”. Chris too brought forth an emerald cut diamond ring and supposedly was as worried about the response as any suitor would have been. “It was very romantic and well thought out, but more than that we don't want to tell,” Madeleine described the occasion. One guess was that Chris proposed in German - he always spoke German when he wanted to be extra private.

After the wedding, Madeleine was photographed for Elle. The report was eleven pages of good-looking pictures of her in gala dresses and high heels - her “work uniform” - but she also gave an interview. As usual, she spoke in tongues. It became clear (my interpretation) that Chris was romantic, a gentleman, security and a shield - “It's Chris and me against the world some how”. The work at Childhood had given her a new perspectives on life: To be kind to oneself, to look positively at life and to do some good instead of sitting at home being depressed.³

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Christopher O'Neill was born on June 29, 1974, the only child of American banker Paul Cesario O'Neill (1926-2004) and German-born socialite Eva Marie Walter (1940-). His father had three daughters in a previous marriage. His mother had two daughters from two previous marriages. The marriage lasted from 196x to 198x. She then married a fourth time. She was

¹ Stina Cederholm. Smekmånaden kvar i vardagen. Svenska Dagbladet, 2013-07-15.

² Jenny Hedelin. ”Det var skönt att lämna Sverige.” Dagens Industri - Weekend, 2010-11-16.

³ Hermine Coyet Ohlén. [Intervju med prinsessan Madeleine.] Elle, 2013-11.

much talked about for a supposed steamy love affair with Prince Charles - as it seems while they were both married - perhaps the reason for the divorce of Chris's father, but that's all hearsay.

Chris was sent to the boarding school Institut auf dem Rosenberg in St Gallen, Switzerland. The school was for students 6-18 years. The student base was like Sigtuna and Lundsberg - rootless business and diplomatic saplings left to their own devices. The school also received outsiders from St Gallen and its surroundings, but these students were in the minority. Chris attended high school there from 1988 to 1992. After graduating, he moved to Boston, where he earned a bachelor's degree in International Relations and then a Master's degree in Business Administration from Columbia Business School. The studies were carried out in two stages in 1992-1996 and 2003-2005.

In 1996, he joined NM Rotschild & Sons and later Stein Asset management. He is currently a partner and head of research at the hedge fund company Noster Capital. It was founded in 2007 and consists of four members. The company speculates on future prices - selling borrowed shares and later buying them back at a lower price - so-called short selling. As "head of research", O'Neill is responsible for the forecasts. He is believed to have an equity of \$5 million both inherited and earned - much the same as Madeleine. The financial crisis favoured the company to the point that Chris could afford an apartment near Central Park, drive a Porsche and take holidays in style. There is no record that he has any disposable wealth or even reserves, but some of his spendings in recent years have been so large that it suggests further inherited money.

In 2012, the company's tax planning was criticized. The company was registered in Delaware, the US tax haven, and had accounts in the Caribbean and Cayman Islands. Prior to the engagement, Chris sat down with the company's lawyer and went through what was written about them. The defence was a bit lame. Chris claimed to work only for Noster Capital LLC (limited liability company), not for Noster Capital International which had the accounts. He also promised not to invest in Sweden.

Because so little is known about Chris' financial position and past life, there will no doubt be surprises. He has had several short-term relationships that all seem to have crashed due to his work pace. The latest (crash) was in 2008 with the Uzbek model Maryam Abdullina. Maryam was born in 1985 and had a similar background to Sofia Hellqvist, aesthetic high school in Tashkent 1999-2003, modelling in New York and 2013 an economically beneficial marriage to the multimillionaire Khajak Keledjian.

Researching his biography, Johan T Lindwall searched for a criminal record but found only parking tickets. Chris was generally inaccessible to photographers - mostly at home working - except when he was walking the couple's dog Zorro. He was no charmer and he didn't give interviews. The court eventually released that he was Catholic, interested in sports, had a good singing voice and read a lot. Those who have heard him speak say that he has lived in so many language zones that his pronunciation is off. He does not sound American, nor British, but "Euro-English". Other information is trivia from the photo coverage.

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Since she says so, one must assume that World Childhood is part of Madeleine's future. During her spring 2006 New York UNICEF internship, she was at the Child Protection

service. This was a department dealing with the protection of children in war-affected countries, children in institutions and children who had been sexually abused. In the autumn of 2006 to spring of 2010 she interned at the World Childhoods Stockholm office. Her mentor was Deputy Secretary-General Anna De Geer who taught her about everything related to being a project manager. Madeleine focused on China and "Children in Institutions". One of the projects was "Half the Sky", a Chinese project about orphanages for abandoned children - mostly girls and disabled - for whom those in charge tried to find foster families.

First of all, I am a project manager. I am responsible for evaluation and funding, but also for contacts with various projects. I make sure they are reporting to us in the proper manner. They have to send quarterly reports on how the day-to-day operations are going, so there is quite a lot of paperwork. ... But since I am who I am, and can open doors that otherwise would have stayed shut, I sit on several chairs within the organization.^{4,5}

It is difficult to assess Madeleine's efforts as a trainee or up-and-comer within World Childhood. I'll give it a try:

1. As most of the people active in Childhood were approaching retirement, in autumn 2006 she started a network called "The young group" later renamed "Childhood 2nd generation" for those who wanted to follow in their parents' footsteps.⁶ C2G collected some money in connection with World Childhood's 10th anniversary in 2009 but seems since to have been dormant.
2. In 2010, she contributed to Childhood's funding through a deal with Genetic Denim, a US denim brand, that the profits for one of their models would go to Childhood. Not known how much it amounted to.
3. In 2013, she started a project called ThankYou.org for "microdonations" online.
4. She has been interviewed, photographed and written articles about Childhood's activities.

Her other activities administration, inspection trips and representation are extensive but routine.

Madeleine's continued role within the royal family is unclear. She is unsure whether Childhood is compatible with marriage. She has talked of - in the manner of Norwegian princess Märtha Louise - renouncing her succession and then devoting herself to representing Swedish (fashion) industry.

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As a biographer, I am not very satisfied with my portrayal of Madeleine. It's like studying a person through moiré glass. The problem is lack of interviews. Other biographers have had the same problem.

⁴ Jenny Hedelin. "Det var skönt att lämna Sverige." Dagens Industri - Weekend, 2010-11-16.

⁵ Madeleine Bernadotte. My year with Childhood. A Perfect Guide - to Childhood, 2011-12-10.

⁶ Josephine Zapata Génomay. En prinsessa i tiden. Elle, 2010:1, s 46-59.

My own thoughts about Madeleine is that she is a princess and socialite to her fingertips and considers a bourgeois existence as meaningless. In addition, she is mother-bound, has poor self-confidence, only takes action under pressure, wants to live at a higher level than she has money for, enjoys the attention she evokes by just being there - no performance requirements! - and likes the benefits - to travel and meet interesting people. She is a luxury creature - but the decision to her becoming such was taken democratically at Torekov. People complain that she is like she is - but if the Swedish people have made a hobby out of preserving the royal house - how else would she be?

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On December 12, 2015, she and Chris participated in the talk show Skavlan. Chris occupied the interview with a few lines by Madeleine. Both were nervous and rather unfocused. It was clear that Madeleine was as lousy a housewife as rumoured - she had never cooked Chris a meal. It also seemed that she had left this with Childhood behind her - at least she didn't mention what she was doing - and now that she lived in England she wanted to devote herself to supporting Swedish business there. She was asked if she would renounce her title, but the answer was no. The title made people listen.⁷ In 2018 the couple and their three children moved to Florida. Perhaps life is easier there, but somehow I doubt it. Madeleine can run, but she can't hide. A piece of advice seems in place: Madeleine - it's never too late to give it up!

⁷ Hela Skavlan-intervjun – ord för ord. Svenskdam.se, 2015-12-12.