

Chapter 85 : Prince Bertil (1912-1997) – ”The Motor Prince”.

The Swedish heir prince Bertil Gustaf Oscar Carl Eugen, Duke of Halland, was born February 28, 1912, at Stockholm Castle and died January 5, 1997, at Villa Solbacken, Djurgården. His father was Crown Prince Gustaf (VI) Adolf (1882-1973). His mother was the English Princess Margaret of Connaught (1882-1920). 1976 Bertil married his long-time mistress Lilian Craig (1915-2013; b. Davies).

Prince Bertil has been interviewed about his memories (Prince Bertil m.fl. 1983), there is a biography (af Petersens 1992), he appears in the chronicles (Elgklou 1978: ss. 200-201; Ohlmarks 1980: ss. 140-141; Skott 1996: ss. 276-288; Sundberg 2004: ss. 263-264; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 123-125; Norlin 2015: ss. 257-263) and Princess Lilian has been interviewed about their lives together (Princess Lilian 2000). There are also a number of documents and newspaper articles.

I narrate Bertil's biography in six sections: (1) His childhood and education. (2) His prince training and military service. (3) World War II. (4) His activities as a trade ambassador. (5) His honorary duties & representation. (6) His Legacy.

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Bertil & the siblings played with each other or the servants. Bertil had an English nanny, Agnes Wiltshire, ”Nana”, and a German governess - Fräulein Emmi. The children spoke Swedish with the servants. Within the family they spoke English. Bertil's Swedish was lousy up to school age. 1917-1918 he had a kindergarten teacher Elsa Matilda Stenquist (1897-1982; m. Hauffman). Elsa wrote a diary.¹ She told fairy tales, played with him, gave lessons, mothered him & took him for walks.

Autumn 1919 to spring 1924, Bertil attended four preparatory classes at the Royal Castle School. He studied German but not French - that came later. The teacher was Ingrid Bohlin. The classmates were children of court employees & parents' acquaintances: Brita von Heidenstam, Anna Hamilton, Brita Laurin, Eva Rudbeck, Marga Lettström, Göran Sidenbladh, Lars Olof Ekeberg, Johan af Petersens & Johan Dyrssen. Bertil played with them during the breaks and they were invited to his birthday party & he to theirs. That said, there was the usual social distance. Bertil was addressed as ”the Prince” & ate for himself during the lunch breaks. Classmates used to rotate so he had playmates. They were not allowed to fight. They were playmates but not friends. His sister Ingrid was his best friend.

Autumn 1924 to spring 1926 he attended he attended the Beskow School for two years. Since Bertil was not known in appearance, he was allowed to go there alone by tram. Little is known about these years, but he seems to have been unhappy & kept a low profile. It was probably a bit shocking to be treated like almost any other student. The teachers criticized his poor school results. He even got poor grades in order & conduct for smoking. He made no particular impression on his classmates. One of them summed it up long afterwards as Bertil was ”a diffuse person. He wasn't interested in anything. But he still seemed to have easy to learn.” - Another claimed that Bertil was ”ambitious in school, he took his homework seriously”, but had difficulties with his dyslexia.² Difficult to draw any conclusions. Bertil was from a young age interested in technology. One might suspect that he neglected his

¹ Hauffman 2000.

² af Petersens 1992: s. 25.

studies because together with his schoolmates Prince Carl jr & Gösta Wennberg tinker with engines. It appears that these were flat-bottomed plywood boats known as “galoshes”.

In 1926 Bertil started at Lundsberg boarding school. There was a lot of landed nobility among the students so he was treated with more respect than on ”Beskow”. The grades were poor but he was good in sports - a total of 137 prizes of various kinds. He was most successful in speed skating & standing high jump. Bertil is said to have been good in languages - probably is meant his English - but chose the modern side with a view to a future in the fleet. His lack of interest in the humanities seems to have led to a couple of slaps from his teacher in Swedish & German Nils Wetterstrand that Bertil still remembered with bitterness in the 1950s. The last year he received his home education from private teachers and May 12, 1931, he passed his baccalaureate at the castle as a private student.

During the summers Bertil spent time at Sofiero & with his grandparents in England. He learned to ride but was moderately amused. Incidentally, he bathed, made excursions & enjoyed himself. In the summer of 1927 he practised three months at Thulinverken in Landskrona - the departments for the manufacture of cars, aircraft engines and motorcycles. He had a motorcycle and commuted between Sofiero & the factory. He took a course in “motor knowledge” & received instructions for a driving license. March 30, 1928, he was confirmed in Lungsunda church, Värmland, by his Christian teacher Verner Lind. In the summer of 1928 he was admitted as a volunteer (=waister) in the Royal Swedish Sailing Society (KSSS) and also practised on board the Swedish armoured ship and torpedo cruiser Örnén. In the summer of 1929, he followed the coastal fleet exercises three weeks aboard the destroyer Nordenskjöld. In the summer of 1930 there is no information but he probably repeated the high school course.

September 9, 1928, Bertil was involved in a traffic accident. A former student at Lundsberg Sven Thermaenius visited the school in a car, with the intention of meeting his younger brother Karl Edvard. The brothers Thermaenius, Bertil and two other school friends decided to make an excursion in the area. First Sven drove. He then he handed the wheel to Bertil. According to the police interrogations, it happened that the car came too far out on the right side of the road and when Bertil tried to steer it back something happened which caused it to overturn. Charles Edward, who was closest to Bertil, jerked at the wheel. As Karl Edward was caught under the car and died, he would, according to the other passengers, have caused his own death.³

Monday September 24, the case was heard at the Färnabo District Court. Bertil was charged with violating the motor vehicle regulation § 39 - driving without a license - but not for causing a death. Bertil was not present at the trial but was represented by a lawyer. He submitted a letter in which he acknowledged the substance but invoked extenuating circumstances, including a certificate that he had knowledge equivalent to a driving license, but because of his minor age - he had not yet reached the age of 18 - was not allowed to take the test. He was fined 500 kronor.⁴

Afterwards, it has been debated that it seems too appropriate that the victim had himself to blame, but no information has been forthcoming to the contrary.

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³ Dagens Nyheter, 1928-09-13, s. 14.

⁴ Dagens Nyheter, 1928-09-25, s. 9.

June 25, 1931, Bertil joined the Naval Warfare School and October 4, 1934, he graduated. The training was the same as King Carl Gustaf later underwent: A mixture of theoretical studies and marine practice. Bertil's best grades were in command, armoury & ship manoeuvring. His orders were always understandable and you heard what he said to you. The theory, especially tidal theory & celestial navigation, was worse. His average rating was 6/10. In French he had 5/10, i.e. failed, and should really have had to leave. But his good English rating 9/10 was allowed to make up for the shortage. Bertil was the last semester noticeably tired, but managed well in the oral hearings.

Bertil's father had urged the school leadership to treat his son like a cadet any other, and half-hearted attempts were made to that end. Bertil was still called the Prince & had dinner by himself in town, which the others could rarely afford. On board the training vessel Falken he was given no pardon, however. He had to climb the rig with the others. The long journey with the armoured cruiser Fylgia in the winter of 1931/32 was much noted. The route was Mediterranean-Suez Canal-Minicoy (an atoll island north of the Maldives)-Colombo (Sri Lanka)-Bombay (India) & back. Christmas celebrations took place on the Red Sea. The stored Christmas trees had lost all their needles, but were painted green. On the way back they entered Alexandria and got to look at the pyramids. Bertil's narration of the trip is characterized by tourist views, picturesque details & good mood. The contrast could not be greater against af Pedersen's depiction of Bertil's attempts to blend in where he alternated between the usual duties - the coal-shovelling was particularly vile - and his port representation. He had settled into Edmund's photographic pose, where it looked as if all the world's woes rested on his shoulders. Further naval service was on the torpedo cruiser Psilander, the coastal defence ship Oscar II & the torpedo cruiser Örn.

October 1934 and five months ahead, Bertil, his father, Crown Princess Louise and Princess Ingrid were on a tour of the Near East: Greece-Turkey-Syria-Iraq-Iran-Palestine-Egypt-Ethiopia. Bertil joined in Aleppo. The aim was both cultural exchange and trade. The trip in its entirety is documented in a book with his father's pictures⁵, and there are some longer articles.⁶ As for Bertil, the trip is as under-reported as his three years in the Beskow school. He is said to have accompanied them as a driver, but that function he seems only to have filled in Iran. The real reason was to separate him from an unwanted female acquaintance (see next chapter 86). January 29, 1935, the company was back in Stockholm. During the summer, Bertil served on the destroyer Ehrensköld.

October 1, 1935 to April 20, 1937, Bertil was assistant military attaché at the Paris legation. The task was to compile data on the French fleet for a few hours each morning. These were mainly newspaper reports. He had a Swedish Sorbonne student as aid. Bertil's French slowly improved. He met a lot of people. In June 1936, he began a five-month professional practice at SKF's factory outside Paris and then at their drawing office. He also attended courses at the auditing firm Price & Waterhouse and at Worms bank. October 3, 1936, he was promoted to second lieutenant in the Navy & in the Halland Regiment, May 7, 1937, to lieutenant.

⁵ Lagerberg red. 1935.

⁶ Svenska Dagbladets årsbok 1934: ss. 73-77; "Kronprinsparet rustar till Orientresa." Vecko Journalen 1934:35; "Kronprinsparets Palestinabesök." Judisk tidskrift 1935, ss. 9-14; Svenska Dagbladets årsbok 1935: ss. 81-84; R.J. [Robert Josephsson.] "Sex timmar med kronprinsen." Vecko Journalen 1935:5, ss. 22-23.

April 20 to August 12, 1937, Bertil served on the destroyer Gothenburg. August 15, 1937 to June 17, 1938 he again served at the Paris legation, but with unclear tasks. He took a course in cooking - 3.5 months at the restaurant school Cordon Bleu - and raced incognito under the name Monsieur Adrian. It seems to have been 14 races in all with first a self-renovated Bugatti & later a factory-new ditto. Bertil considered himself a good amateur driver, but did not elite class. According to himself his biggest handicap was his poor night vision.

June 17 to August 2, 1938, he accompanied his father and mother-in-law at the New Sweden jubilee in Delaware. When his father was hospitalized for a kidney stone operation, Bertil took over the program. On June 27 he opened the Delaware Monument and relayed Gustaf V's greetings. There are some photographs from the moment. Bertil looks youthful sheepish, but his command voice carried & he managed the American journalists. Representing his father – still in the sickbed - he was July 19 awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Pittsburgh in front of 2000 people. Bertil gave a lengthy speech on the importance of science and technical research to modern industry. On his return he was asked about his strongest memory from the trip:

My strongest memory from the trip? ... Yes, it was definitely Detroit! I had long been happy to get there and look at the auto-mobile factories, and, and it was a brilliant experience for me. It was especially interesting to study the great laboratories. But the biggest experience was, when I got to meet Henry Ford in person. He made an extraordinary impression, and I shall never forget the day he took me to the strange city where he brought the history of American inventions to life in a number of buildings, including the old laboratory of Edison, where one could see the inventor's first lamps shine and phonographs in work, not forgetting Ford's own earliest workshop, where his first engine etc. is available to view and, on solemn occasions, also to get started.⁷

Bertil's service at the Paris legation continued until June 1, 1939, when he was to serve on the destroyer Gothenburg. It is unclear whether this was the case. During the autumn he practised at Mo & Domsjö's sulfate & sulfite factory in Husum. Then the war intervened & September 3, 1939, he signed on to the destroyer Malmö. The duties included escorting neutral merchant ships by intervening between the Germans and the merchant ship to prevent interception. It was his last seagoing service.

Bertil's total seagoing service was 1500 days. After the war, he was promoted to honorary positions, in 1969 to admiral.

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In the autumn of 1939, Sweden had succeeded in buying some war material from neutral Italy, including four motor torpedo boats. Two more were purchased from England. The largest producer was Germany but they were not willing to sell. In January 1940 Gunnar Hägglöf, head of the Foreign Ministry's trade policy department, was sent to the U.S.A. with a wish list: Tanks, torpedo boats, fighters, an armoured cruiser, etc. Accompanying him were Bertil, Volvo Boss Assar Gabrielsson & Admiral Henning Wijkmark. Bertil was a supposed friend of Roosevelt, they had got along well at the Delaware visit, and maybe that would help. For confidentiality reasons, the delegation took a detour over Germany and Italy: Train to Genoa via Berlin. From there the America boat. In Berlin, Bertil participated in a grand feast

⁷ Dagens Nyheter, 1938-08-03, s. 5. [Besöket ägde rum 1938-07-13.]

in honour of Göring. Göring was Sweden-friendly, had even been married to a Swede & the legation was keen to cultivate his acquaintance, including a flattering attention from the Swedish royal house. The Prince Bertil delegation arrived January 24, 1940, and stayed for two months. The visit was disappointing. Most renown is Bertil's unsuccessful attempt to purchase the armoured cruiser Pensacola. He met President Roosevelt, his foreign minister and other leading figures, all of whom stalled until the request was axed in the Congress Defence Committee. Other items were permitted though: 60 Seversky P35A fighters, 4300 Smith & Wesson machine guns, ammunition, gas masks, telephones and connecting wire.⁸

There seems to have been a great deal of prestige involved. Folke Bernadotte had at the same time set up a contact network for purchasing materials for Finland, which he thought Sweden should also benefit from. He expected to be consulted at least, but spent three days at his hotel in New York without anyone contacting him. He felt humiliated, but also thought that the Prince Bertil delegation was incompetent, who did not understand the value of his personal contacts. His wife Estelle portrayed it after his death as Folke had prepared a purchasing service which never was used.

March 1940, a division of motortorpedo boats (six of them) was in place in Långedrag outside Gothenburg. May 20 Bertil arrived to take command of boat T4. Since the weapons branch was new, they mainly dealt with skills development & material tests. New models were tested 50-60 hours at high speed & in harsh weather before being purchased. Bertil's T4 set a speed record of 58.8 knots. In 1941 Bertil & his crew tested an Italian model, in 1942 a Swedish-made version. In 1941, Bertil visited Danzig for a possible German purchase that didn't happen this time either. On February 13, 1942, he was promoted to captain.

At the end of August 1942, Bertil was sent to London to serve as assistant naval attaché and perform the same duties as in Paris. He read the papers, made study visits, kept in contact with other countries' naval attachés & represented. At the turn of the year 1943/44 he deputized as a regular naval attaché. His command supposedly came about to separate him from yet another unwanted female acquaintance (see next chapter 86) but caused some concern both among the Germans and the Norwegian exile government who wondered about the intention.

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After the war, Bertil continued his career as a trade ambassador for the Export Association. The first assignment was to hand over wooden houses for the reconstruction work in Normandy where D day much of the buildings were razed to the ground.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had since the end of the war discussed a trade delegation to Chile - it appears initially to have been an initiative by Trade Minister Gunnar Myrdal within the so-called Latin America Agency - but the plans did not take shape until autumn 1946. The Chileans, however, wanted such high level industrialists that the Foreign Ministry had to include another six countries to attract a suitable delegation. Prince Bertil and the chairman of the Swedish Trade Council, Rolf von Heidenstam, were at the end of September 1946 asked if they were willing to participate. There was a tradition in the navy to interact with the export industry. The switch from naval officer to trade ambassador was a natural. Rolf von Heidenstam, who also was Chamberlain, spoke to Bertil's father, who approved the assignment on behalf of his son as long as it did not clash with his other duties.

⁸ Hägglöf 1972: ss. 18-34.

I trained myself to become some kind of ambassador for Sweden and the Swedish export industry, it was a job that amused me and that I learned from the ground up. I speak several languages (the Prince speaks English literally as if born there, French and German perfectly, Spanish and Italian if necessary), I like people and have no difficulty in getting along, and I had an intimate knowledge of Sweden and the Swedish business community. When the so-called The Prince Bertil delegation had completed their - I think quite successful - tour of South America in 1947, I thought - when we recuperated in Punta del Este [Uruguay] and reviewed the result - that I had found my vocation.⁹

The delegation consisted of Prince Bertil, Rolf von Heidenstam, CEO Helge Ericsson at LM Ericsson, manager Elof Ericsson at Åtvidaberg's industries, member of the 2nd chamber industrialist Åke Wiberg, a secretary from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and a few other people. Later delegations have had up to 50 participants, but this first was very small. The journey took place on November 30, 1946 and they were gone for two months. They visited Chile, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Afterwards, they had vivid memories of what it was like to be thrown around in the gusts over the Andes in one of Panagra's DC-3s. They ended up having to make an emergency landing and continue by car.

During the trip, political and economic contacts were established and they took the opportunity to meet larger customers and suppliers. A further important task was to reconnect with the local representatives of the companies who had been left by the wind during the war years to keep the business alive. One immediate effect of the trip was two agreements on telephone and air connections. The delegation was very satisfied: "It is important to emphasize the extraordinary importance of a royal Swedish prince leading the delegation. Prince Bertil - with his deep interest in the task, his simple and natural way - made a strong impression on everyone we came into contact with."¹⁰

At the end of the journey, they received news of Edmund having died in a plane crash. Prince Bertil shouldered many of his duties. What should have become a civil profession as a trade ambassador was instead included in the representation.

I think I have a certain talent for dealing with businessmen. For the Swedish export delegations, it can also be an advantage to have me as a kind of figurehead - it guarantees in any case a polite and interested reception and contacts at the very highest level. We usually meet with presidents, trade ministers, industry ministers and other official figures, together with leading representatives of the foreign country's largest industries and banks.

The programs are quite tough, but nowadays we can cope with our long journeys and finish them within a couple of weeks. ... How I manage my job as a travelling salesman for the firm of Sweden must surely others assess. [You do what you can. And that's it.] But it seems that both the Swedish Trade Council and the Federation of Industry are quite satisfied with my efforts. ... In Sweden, we sometimes underestimate

⁹ Gunnar Unger. Prins Bertil fyller 50. Svenska Dagbladet, 1962-02-18.

¹⁰ Elof Ericsson. Äventyr i Sydamerika, del II. Vecko-Nytt, 1947:9.

the importance of social contacts and informal interaction in bringing international business to a successful conclusion.¹¹

Diplomacy was often decisive. Axel Iveroth (Federation of Industry): "He is the head of the delegation. He is very active. He is involved in deciding who we should meet, who should meet with whom and what to say and not in various speeches."¹²

Hans Werthén (Ericson): "In the larger contracts for Ericson, for example, he has been very helpful. We have had very strong opponents because our American competitors have often come with vice presidents and whole hordes of people. And the prince has been able to match them quite well."¹³

Over time, it became a hundred shorter and longer journeys. It is difficult to portray them. All information is in the form of anecdotes. Prince Bertil claimed that his own store would fill several volumes. There appears to have been no press coverage. The delegations, claimed to be Prince Bertil's most important achievement, can thus not be described in detail. They were also officially low key. He is not mentioned in the public archives until the 1960's. But in 1983, he was promoted honorary doctor at the University of Technology in Stockholm.

Prince Bertil's official status has not been possible to establish. Formally he was a private citizen. The sales delegations were ordered or at least sanctioned by the Department of Commerce. The decisions about the trips were taken in the cabinet and communicated to the Foreign Ministry in retrospect. The protocol department would have liked to have seen a little more consultation to facilitate the planning.

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After the end of the war, Prince Bertil became involved in his two major leisure time activities sports and cars. During his time in England he played golf.¹⁴ His royal duties were accordingly: He became chairman of the Swedish Auto-mobile Federation (1945-1962) and of the Swedish Golf Association (1946-1947). After Edmund's death, he became chairman of the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF; 1947-1991), in the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOK; 1947-1997) and in the Royal Auto-mobile Club (KAK; 1947-1993). He also had a lot of lesser involvements - at least 50-60 of them. The largest among these was as chairman of the board of the Rifle Association and its continuation the Voluntary Shooting Movement (1948-1997), Grand Master of the Freemasons (1973-1997) and member of the Gastronomic Academy (1958-1997; plate No 17).

Prince Bertil's princely duties consisted of replacing his father in the cabinet meetings when he was on holiday or on a state visit and relieving him of excessive representation. His usual daily routine was to read the mail, keep up to date through the newspapers, investigations and oral reviews and to have meetings and telephone conferences during the afternoon. The job was about keeping up with everything that took place. Even evenings and weekends were consumed. The most difficult period was immediately after the transfer of the throne in 1950. Before and after the cabinet meetings, he received private reviews from the various departments so that in each case he knew what decisions he signed. His duties also included

¹¹ Prins Bertil m.fl 1983.

¹² Anders Hasselbohm. Prins Bertil på ny PR-resa. Vecko Journalen, 1974:47.

¹³ Minnesprogram om prins Bertil. SVT1, 1997-01-05.

¹⁴ Prins Bertil 1991. I: Wennberg red. 1991: ss. 16-23.

an endless number of dinners. By 1954 he had gained weight to such an extent that he was prescribed slimming.

On his 70th birthday, Prince Bertil summarized his life as his greatest contribution being to the sports movement: After the end of the war, it expanded strongly. New special federations were founded which were to be incorporated into the central RF. It was constant work with statutes, facilities, the economy, leadership issues and conflicts of interest. As with the state departments, he was at first poorly informed and RF's board were frequent visitors to the castle for day-long briefings of the issues. Beginning in the 1960s, the RF also sent delegations to neighbouring countries. The first such country was the Soviet Union. The work with SOK also became important. The 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico were universally regarded as a great failure - four meagre medals. Prior to the Munich Olympics in 1972, a series of begging letters were sent signed Prince Bertil. The grants from companies like Stora, MoDo, Folksam and Asea amounted to three million SEK. A number of promising athletes received 20 thousand kronor each for food, travel and training. There were no fewer than 16 medals: four gold, six silver and six bronze. There are many anecdotes about Prince Bertil crossing Munich to embrace the laureates. He had invested much of his prestige and was obviously relieved that the venture fell well out. Sponsorship of Swedish sport by large companies has since continued.

In the Gastronomic Academy he made himself famous for luxurious everyday dishes à la prins Bertil as crêpe with a filling of dill-stewed shrimps in hollandaise sauce, hamburger in chanterelle sauce and leaf steak with a filling of onion, blue cheese and mustard. At the villa Les Mirages, guests were treated with a bouillabaisse on eel, fish and seafood seasoned with salt, pepper, saffron, garlic, tomato and orange peel. French bread drenched in white wine or brandy was served as a side dish.

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The reason why Prince Bertil sacrificed his marriage and personal independence for a position of “adjutant” to his father has been discussed on and off the entire post-war period. Republicans have suggested economic motives or something sick in the family relationships. Prince Bertil himself has referred to duty. He had privileges but with them followed obligations. Carl Gustaf and Silvia have often complained about their situation. Such was Prince Bertil completely alien:

Being a royal prince can sometimes be problematic. But the thing about Bertil is that he; unlike some other royal people, is also aware of the “job's” many benefits. He never complains, at least not to the media, about his woes. His “situation” is generally described as positive.

At some rare point, he can, in private, complain that people do not keep their distance. It has happened that when Prince Bertil sits in a restaurant he is “courted” in a strange way. People have approached the table where he sits and looked at him unremittingly while he is eating - perhaps to study whether royal jaw muscles work in any particular way during the chewing process?¹⁵

Prince Bertil was moderately amused by long dinner speeches. “He was able to show his discontent in his own way. After a tiring parade of lousy dinner speakers it was the

¹⁵ Michael Jägerblom. En prins som vet hur han ska sköta jobbet. Vecko Journalen, 1972:19.

prince's turn: - A good speaker should talk so that he can be heard . (The Prince raises his voice enormously.) - He will also make sure that he is seen. (The Prince steps up on the table.) - If he wants to be popular, he will then quickly sit down.”¹⁶

The closest he has come to “whining” is the following anecdote from his youth:

There was a time when Prince Bertil himself told his friends: “It's awkward experiencing the Swedish Flag Day at least if you're in my clothes. First Grandpa comes and they scream: Long live the king! Then Dad comes and they applaud as if their life depended on it! But when they see me in the third wagon they cry: Down with the royal house!”¹⁷

Questions about his relationship with his father were constantly raised. The answer used to be that they kept a distance. Normally they met once a week during meetings. They also had lunch. If he felt the need to consult his father, he did. After his father's death, he expressed some bitterness at the consequences of fulfilling his duty had had on his private life. However, he did not go as far as to criticize his father. Apparently he considered himself and his father as victims of circumstances and his two brothers Sigvard and Carl Johan as traitors to the throne. He did not hold a similar position in Carl Gustaf's organization as in his father's. The details are unclear, but until his death he had three office rooms at the castle and helped out when necessary.

At the end of his life, Prince Bertil was often asked about his role in a car accident during his school years in 1928. One of the passengers died of his injuries. It seems to have been caused by the car getting too near the wayside and the deceased becoming so scared that he grabbed the steering wheel and thus himself caused his own death. This is however contested. Prince Bertil was fined 500 kronor for driving without a license. The licence he had only applied to motorcycles. There was also much talk about his 14 car races in France time under the assumed name Monsieur Adrian.

The politician Carl Bildt (m) summarized his obituary:

* What is your comment on Prince Bertil's death?

– Deep sadness, of course. If one can use the expression “love of the people”, there is almost no person in Sweden who fits that concept better than the Prince did. For generations of Swedes he was the sports prince. For an older generation also the motor prince. He symbolized the continuity of the royal house and the societal development. For me, he became somewhat of a friend. We had many long warm conversations about social problems which interested him but which he in his public works could not comment on.

* What did he mean to the Swedish monarchy?

– I think he meant a lot for continuity. During a transitional period it was Prince Bertil who with both dignity and popularity represented the continuity and stability of the royal house. He was also a distinguished representative of Sweden around the world. He represented both sports interests and business with the openness and warmth that characterizes Sweden.¹⁸

¹⁶ Knut Grahnquist. En prins med glimten i ögat. Expressen, 1997-01-01.

¹⁷ Bertil Lagerström. Prins Bertil går in för sitt yrke. Året Runt, 1957:17.

¹⁸ Minnesprogram om prins Bertil. SVT1, 1997-01-05.

If this seems to be a bit too much, Prime Minister Persson's (s) judgment was almost identical. Prince Bertil had no enemies. There is probably a lesson buried in this. Edmund, who was the heir to the throne, must of necessity show that he existed - despite bad conditions and an early death, he did in fact make a mark - and for this he has been hated by republican posterity. Prince Bertil, on the other hand, is like a walking void - known and loved for his adaptability and lack of qualities. It has actually been impossible to find any single episode when he stood up for something he believed in. An acquaintance's judgment in 1946 was that "The Crown Prince is, as is well known, an extraordinarily modest man, who is anxious not to cause any trouble."¹⁹ His dyslexia allegedly constrained his horizon, e.g. that he never went to university. Obviously, he thought little of himself - and as the saying goes: "The safest way to hide your limitation is never to exceed it." The characteristic of journalist Åke Ortmark is absolutely devastating: Prince Bertil has no views. He has only prejudices.²⁰ Maybe, but maybe not. At least Bertil had clear priorities:

I have often discussed the monarchy's problems with my sister Ingrid, and she seems to share my view. You have to follow your time, so that you do not feel obsolete, but you must not disown yourself. We must be democratic, but we must remain royal. It is a question of finding a balance if the monarchy is to last.²¹

¹⁹ Åke Wiberg. PM, 1946-11-15. Svenska affärs- och industrimän (delegation) till Sydamerika 1946-1949. UD 1920 års dossiersystem volym H2771.

²⁰ Ortmark 1970: ss. 145-146.

²¹ Sabroe 1970: s. 27. [Min översättning.]