

Chapter 86 : Lilian Craig (1915-2013).

At the castle school, Bertil had female classmates, but then he went to boys' schools. The only exception was that Lundsberg's principal had his daughter in his class. Bertil later refused to speak about the crushes of his youth, why everything below is second-hand information & speculation.

- During his time at the Naval Academy 1931-34 Bertil allegedly entertained a relationship with the two-year-younger officer's daughter Margareta Brambeck (1914-2002) whom he knew through her father Captain Nils Brambeck (1884-1968), a leading person in Stockholm's motor sport circles. Her mother was Gerda Sofia Block (1890-1978). Bertil & Margareta met in Stockholm in the summer of 1930. He attended Brambeck's Motor School. She was an assistant in Marja's fashion salon on Sturegatan. Later they met at various events. March 30, 1934 (?), the court denied a statement in the tabloid newspaper Stockholms Extrablade that they were engaged.¹ Two years later, Aftonbladet published an article that Bertil at the time would have tried to get permission from his father and grandfather to marry her. The father said no, the grandfather asked him to consider the matter two years and in the meantime not to see her. Bertil was sent abroad to forget. They met in Paris. During a visit to Nice in 1936, Bertil allegedly made another futile attempt to obtain his grandfather's permission. In an interview in the Sunday Express 1936-03-28 (?) he said that they were still friends but that they had not met for a long time.² In 1937, Margareta married the architect Anders Tengbom.
- Bertil's next relationship with Swedish Antoinette "Toinon" Decker (1910-1989) is also poorly documented. Her father was the Finnish businessman Walter Decker (1879-1935). Her mother the Swiss Florence de Vallière (1878-1933). Toinon grew up in Sweden and Finland. She had two sisters, Virginia (1907-1909) and Odette (1913-2001). Bertil & she reportedly met in Paris in 1935 and the relationship lasted until 1942. After the war, Toinon moved to New York and in 1952 married the Austrian Hans Ludwig. The marriage was unhappy and eventually they divorced. The information given by Petersens in his biography appears to come exclusively from Toino's sister Odette, but is not very detailed. Most piquant is that Toinon to everyone's dismay accompanied Bertil on his 1938 Delaware visit. Bertil's service in London from 1942 to 1945 is explained by Odette as Bertil wanting to marry Toinon as well, and for this reason yet again was sent abroad.

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During his time as military attaché in London, Bertil met the model, singer etc. Lilian Craig (1915-2013) with whom he began a relationship in 1943. There are three longer depictions (Prince Bertil 1983; af Petersens 1992; Prinsessan Lilian 2000). She also appears briefly in the chronicles (Elgklou 1978: s. 201; Ohlmarks 1979: ss. 132-133; Skott 1996: ss. 285-288; Sundberg 2004: s. 264; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 123-125; Norlin 2015: ss. 257-260). Additional sources are Ted Rosvall's genealogy³, interviews with the couple and their acquaintances & "incidental findings".

¹ Aftonbladet 1934-03-31; Dagens Nyheter, 1934-03-31.

² Aftonbladet, 1936-03-29.

³ Rosvall 1992.

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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.⁴

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."⁵ 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".⁶ 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

⁴ Georg Cederskog. Prinsessan Lilian - en askungesaga. Expressen, 1997-04-06.

⁵ Prinsessan Lilian m.fl. 2000.

⁶ 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.]

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. However, there are rumours that they were married in Paris by the Swedish consul, Raoul Nordling.⁷

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.”⁸

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.”⁹ Sickan soon discovered, however, that the little Meissen doll's favourite dish was turnip mash and pork rinsed with beer. She also liked cabbage rolls, 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

⁷ Cecilia Hagen. Deras kärlek besegrade allt. Expressen, 1997-01-07.

⁸ Hänt i Veckan, 1983:47. [Intervju med Howard Keel.]

⁹ Carlsson 1977: ss. 166-178.

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."¹⁰ Indiscreet court employees were dismissed.¹¹ 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.

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.¹²

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!"¹³ 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.¹⁴

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

¹⁰ af Petersens 1992.

¹¹ Karl-Gunnar Bäck. Stockholms slott, del 3. Slottets prinsar aldrig hemma. Året Runt, 1963:41.

¹² Husmodern, 1976:46.

¹³ af Petersens 1992.

¹⁴ Svensk Damtidning, 1973:43.

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.”¹⁵

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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 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.¹⁶

Upon Nikita Krushev's visit in 1964, Gustaf VI introduced her as his English aunt (a habit that Carl Gustaf 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 *Hänt i veckan's* 1967 report about Bertil's life she was till a non-person.¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸ 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

¹⁵ Henry Sidoli. Hushållerska på Villa Solbacken. *Hänt i Veckan*, 1987:22.

¹⁶ Gösta Ollén. ”Monarki eller republik? Det beror på hur vi sköter jobbet.” *Expressen*, 1962-02-13.

¹⁷ Marga Lettström-Lundmark. [Om prins Bertil.] *Hänt i veckan*, 1967:25-29.

¹⁸ Björkman 1987.

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.¹⁹

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!”

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.²⁰

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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.”²¹ - “With her fine combination of spontaneity, warmth, humor and not least tact, she was quickly loved by everyone who got to know her.”²² 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 Carl Gustaf. 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

¹⁹ Elisabeth Reich. Om prins Bertil och Lilian Craig. Allers, 1976:50.

²⁰ Prins Bertil m.fl. 1983.

²¹ Året Runt, 1976:48.

²² Chris Thoen. Utomlands betraktar man dem som ett äkta par. Svensk Damtidning, 1972:14.

bohemian, something that the prince in his heart also is and that he loves about her.”²³ 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 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵

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.²⁶

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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

²³ Tove Elias-Nielsen. Prins Bertil och Lilian Craig. Året Runt, 1969:29.

²⁴ Das Neue Blatt, 1969. Citat ur: Svensk Damtidning, 1969:11.

²⁵ af Petersens 1992.

²⁶ Kvällsposten, 1969-03-27; Expressen, 1969-10-26.

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.²⁷ The counterargument was that if one did not take care, soon the entire population would be entitled to the throne.

²⁷ Tarras-Wahlberg & Treslow 1968.