

Chapter 94 : Princess Desirée (b. 1938).

Princess Désirée Elisabeth Sibylla of Sweden, "Hé" or "Hes" among friends, was born June 2, 1938, at Haga Castle. Her father was Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden (1906-1947). Her mother was Princess Sibylla of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1932-1972). June 5, 1964, she married the businessman etc. baron Niclas Silfverschiöld (b. 1934) and with him had three children 1965-1968.

The literature about Desirée consists of short biographies (Holmgren red. 1968; Elgklou 1978: ss. 216-217; Ohlmarks 1979: ss. 140-141; Skott 1996: s. 297; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 144-147; Norlin 2015: s. 276) & a number of newspaper articles. See also Chapter 90.

*

Desirée attended the Castle school five years until 1950 and then the French school where she graduated in 1956. Like Birgitta, she skipped mathematics, physics and chemistry. She then spent six months in Switzerland at the Château D'Oex where, like her sisters, she studied languages and received polish, then a four-month course at the Society's Child Care in Stadshagen and a two-year preschool teacher training at the Social Pedagogical Seminary in 1958. In 1961, she took the same one-year cooking course as Margaretha and in 1962 a two-year course in handicraft at the textile line at the Stockholm school of fine arts. In between there was representation. She and Birgitta often accompanied each other. Birgitta was blunt and outward. "A Christina Scholin (swedish actress) with a crown on her head." Desirée was her opposite: withdrawn and cool in the way, at the same time haughty, shy and insecure of her role. Her teacher on the textile line Mrs. Edna Martin:

In September 1962, when Princess Desirée entered the textile department of the School of Fine Arts, she had only signed up for one year. At that time, her interest in handicraft was more on the hobby plane and she may have thought that one year could suffice to learn pattern drawing, weaving, art sewing and other textile skills. But during the first two terms her whole attitude changed. She is now in her third semester and intends to continue until the wedding this spring.

During these three terms, the princess has made tremendous progress. It was so noticeable at the beginning that she did not take her own talent seriously. When she showed me what she had accomplished, she usually laughed a contagious laugh that roughly wanted to say that "this is of course nothing strange". When she found out that I *cared about* the little hooks she made, that they interested me, she was extremely surprised. When she became fully aware of her talent, she stopped laughing and became at least as interested as her peers in vocational education. ... Above all, she has displayed an excellent sense of colour, revealing an original talent.

[This should not be interpreted as Desirée forgetting who she was.] On a class trip to Gothenburg in March 1963, the person responsible for the trip wanted to pay her train ticket which Desirée refused. After much arguing, she straightened herself up, looked the person in the face and said aloud "*You are not permitted to tell me what I will do.*"¹

¹ Husmodern, 1964:8.

Desirée was also something of a practical joker. During the preparations for Birgitta's wedding, she pretended to be a journalist and called Ingrid Björnberg with all sorts of strange questions.² Another time she called a friend who she knew was looking for a nanny. Desirée with disguised voice: - Me be in Ståkkholma on lightning and be able to help immediately, Madame, I have recommendation of fine family in Europe. When the friend tried to hang up the phone, Desirée continued mercilessly: - Me come immediately with my luggage-things!³

When questioned, Desirée replied that she wanted to marry an ordinary man, not royalty. The son of Sibylla's chamberlain Count Greger Lewenhaupt (1937-1960) was the heir to the entailed estate Geddeholm, but he died in a skiing accident shortly before the intended wedding. Desirée was so depressed that Birgitta persuaded her friend Eva Norlin to move into the castle, to keep her company and make sure she got through the day. Come autumn Desirée had recovered and accompanied Birgitta on a public relations trip to America. In 1964, she married Baron Niclas Silfverschiöld, the heir to the entailed estate Koberg. To be sure nothing went wrong, apparently the Baron was somewhat shy, she proposed herself. Images of the wedding were shown at a Soviet photographic exhibition as examples of how the capitalist upper class amused themselves at the expense of the working proletariat.⁴ Their wedding exhilaration was tempered by an inheritance tax on the estate of one million kronor that took several years to work off.

*

Desirée showed the estate interiors a number of times, but never allowed herself to be interviewed. She is the most anonymous of the Haga princesses. The reason is alleged to be that she does not want to "exploit her birth"⁵. Hard to avoid though. The surroundings were curious & for a while there were constant visits. It is not clear what she does. What I have found is that the castle - 50 rooms - and the art collections requires time, that she organizes tourist events - a Christmas market with exhibitions, crafts, game meat & concerts -, that she hosts representational hunts – i.e. has a catering service -, that she rents summer cottages & fishing waters, that she raised the children and keeps busy. The inheritance of her father and grandfather made her the richest person in the area. Niclas is second richest.

² Lisa Killander & Margit Fjellman. Om prinsessan Desirée. Husmodern, 1964:23.

³ Inga-Lill Sjöström. Om prinsessan Desirée. Allers, 1971:50.

⁴ Svenska Dagbladet, 1964-10-08.

⁵ Norlin 2015: s. 276.