

Let's see your CV: Turning from Girlfriend to Princess

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I was in Paris with my sister, brother-in-law, and niece and nephew helping my college chum, Anita Yasuda, celebrate the publication of her latest book, Hello Kitty Forever (www.anitayasuda.com), when the Kate Middleton saga began to hit the paparazzi lens. Anita told me people want to read an article that addresses the issues beyond the surface. And that I should write it.

Presenting to you: A guide to successfully turning a girlfriend into a princess. This is based on recent trends I noticed as a royal watcher of long standing. I will draw upon the examples of those young women who made it to Princess and those who did not. With Crown Prince Felipe de Borbon of Spain, there is an example of each! Let's examine one girlfriend who made it to princess-hood and one where the retreat to normalcy ultimately showed her grace and class.

First of all, these days there is no 'dash to the altar'. With the very public 'failures to launch' of Diana and Fergie, royal houses are now taking the 'wait-and-see' approach to adding new members. They take their time. This is illustrated most recently by Luxembourg. Despite getting pregnant, Tessy Anthony was not compelled to marry Prince Louis of Luxembourg. They did marry in 2006 as young parents, but he had to renounce his rights and she and the son were denied status.

Another significant new practice sees the move away from endorsing a 'work in progress' the young naïve girl who can be shaped - that charming practice which had its day. Betting on an unknown (The Apprentice: Royal Edition?) is a high risk proposition with paparazzi and 24/7 internet coverage in which anyone can give feedback like Simon Colwell.

Thus turning away from hiring on potential, royal houses hire based on performance. In other words, let's see her track record, her CV.

So what goes into the CV of a serious contender for Princess?

Not too much different from what goes into your CV: education, work history, extra-curriculars, and references. Only the scale and the scrutiny.

Eva Sannum dated Prince Felipe for four years. The child of divorced Norwegians, she put herself through school, working as a model for catalogues, fashion shows and shoots around the world. Studying marketing (natch!), the tall blond Norwegian learnt to speak English, Greek (while spending time with her mother and the second husband in Rhodes), Spanish, Italian, German, and French. In none of these languages, to this day, she has never talked to the press (tip to Marie Cavallier...)

Given her impressive CV and discretion, what prevented the transition to Princess Eva de Borbon?

As we all know, after the CV, now comes the interview process, and two obstacles stopped the candidacy of Eva Sannum.

Spain did not think the gracious Eva Sannum fit what they were looking for. I say Spain because the conservative media, aristocracy, in short, the 'betters' failed to appreciate the fine qualities in Eva Sannum's resume - erroneously saying "She has done nothing with her life." (ABC Madrid Ramon Perez Maura). Commentators basically refused to take a chance on her

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– if something were to happen to Felipe, Eva could be Queen Regent of Spain if her child were a minor. They wanted a royal in the tradition of Queen Sofia, not Eva, to represent Spain to the world.

(On the other hand, the fact she was a university student/working girl, of divorced parents, not born Catholic nor aristocratic, and this was a love match for many Spaniards represented their reality. Liberals were more accepting.)

The other obstacle was lack of proximity. In other words, long distance relationships don't work. If you cannot see each other on an ordinary basis, then your periods of contact under the halo of Best Behaviour paint a skewed picture of your beau, the belle, and the relationship. It may be fine, it may be passionate, but it is not real.

Not that I am advocate of cohabitation (or as the French call it "concubinage"), but living not more than 50 miles of each other is about the limit. They don't have to see each other every day but they must be ABLE to see logistically each other. And preferably in the country where they will live. (Alexandra Manley found that the hard way to take your time, as she barely got to see Denmark before marrying Prince Joachim. And Sarah had been under the impression she signed up to marrying a prince to live with – surprise to find out Andrew would be a husband, but not a companion on a day-to-day basis. That is unnecessarily sad that Sarah had no influence on the decision. And we know how each of those marriages ended.)

During their four year courtship, Eva and Felipe spent most of their time meeting on vacation. Granted it would have been a more of a challenge for Eva (compared to Mary Donaldson and Maxima Zorrigueta Cerruti) to establish herself permanently in Spain and for people to appreciate her... Unfortunately as a consequence, Spaniards knew her best through modeling pictures and paparazzi shots meeting Felipe in India , Paris , St Moritz , Norway , making her seem very lightweight, doubting her ability to share the heavy burden of a crown.

We see that happening with Kate Middleton. In this day and age, women are expected to use their brains and abilities and expensive education to make a contribution to a better world in a job, whether paid or volunteer, not wait on standby for a man. Lady Diana Spencer, the daughter of an Earl, for heaven's sake, never needed to worry about putting food on the table but she set the example as a kindergarten teacher, foreshadowing her concern for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised. Instead of taking tips from Diana's example, Kate Middleton has not developed much of a CV. Compare Kate's slim CV and work history to that of Crown Princesses Maxima of the Netherlands , Mary of Denmark, or Sophie of Liechtenstein. Instead of creating a trackrecord of accomplishments, she has earned the moniker of Lazy Kate by forever whooping it up at clubs and on posh vacations. Her new job is hardly 'roll up your sleeves' Habitat for Humanity. If that's all there is to Kate, waiting for the call to Princesshood, well, Dorothy Parker said, "There's no 'there' there." It would be advisable for Kate to do something serious as current reaction in some circles to Kate Middleton can be summed up in Lady Colin Campbell's Guide to Being a Modern Lady p 114 – 5 "I was certainly not about to curtsy to the likes of that."

If Eva Sannum had shared the good fortune of her compatriot, Mette-Marit Tjseem Holby, the party girl single mother of a son resulting from a fling with a convicted drug dealer who nevertheless married Crown Prince Haakon of Norway, there would have been two Norwegians as European Crown Princesses. Both ladies had the love of their beaux – but

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luckily for Mette-Marit, HIS parents were supportive of the union. Helen Reddy's song "You and Me Against the World" goes so far – you need as many important allies as possible.

If the monarch is the head of the nation and all citizens are therefore the members of the household, then take a minute to understand that the girlfriend has a countryful of her beau's siblings, parents, eccentric aunts, dispersed cousins to get on her side. Or at least not in the way. That's what I mean by it differs only on scale and scrutiny. Every Tom, Dick and Harry (or in the case of Spain , Tomas, Ricardo y Enrico) wants to be included in the creation of a Princess for the Country to Be Proud Of. Rumour has it that Queen Sofia supported her son's choice while the King was no convinced. And a house divided does not stand.

In their only official appearance together as a couple, at the 2001 August wedding reception of Mette-Marit and Prince Haakon, Felipe and Eva did not pass their audition. They looked beautiful together, she a statuesque Blonde of 6 ft, only a few inches shorter than Felipe. And Spanish commentators did say she would make a fine Crown Princess. Of Norway , not Spain . They took issue with her choice of dress, a jewel blue halter dress with an amazingly low neckline. They did not agree with my favourable assessment, instead finding it inappropriate.

Once they came clean publicly at the Norwegian wedding, Eva Sannum therefore was acknowledged as a serious candidate. And the paparazzi attention increased exponentially, pursuing Eva Sannum everywhere, including classes and exams, hoping for signs of an announcement. Those who do not learn from history... which confounds me how naïve the Windsors are to think consenting to Kate Middleton's presence with the Queen at William's de facto graduation into the army would not inspire an explosion of media interest. Pull your finger out!

In December 2001, Felipe made a surprise appearance before a gathering of press editors to announce he and Eva were mutually ending their relationship and would remain friends. The traditionalists praised him for doing his duty – although that may have been scant comfort to the Prince. With Eva being the classy lady she is, it was highly unlikely she would stick around. She moved on and I bet Eva Sannum is deservedly happier and more successful and serene than ever.

The woman Felipe did make his Princess did not please the traditionalists much more than Eva. Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano was a university-educated working girl, of divorced parents, not born aristocratic. The Madrid-based Spanish love of Felipe was also divorced after a year of marriage to a former professor. And a newsreader and journalist on TV. Like Eva, she was a public figure in her own right. And familiarity breeds contempt?

This time Felipe was determined to not again lose a love and a partner for life due to media influence. He did a preemptive strike. The courtship was hush-hush. And it came to light only on the day of the engagement announcement. He gave the conservative forces no time to divide the public. Letizia was presented as a fait-accomplis. It is alleged that Felipe told his family would renounce his rights rather than give up another love – and to prove his point, stayed away from a royal family engagement.

This love match for many Spaniards represented their reality – social mobility, women in the public eye, marrying the wrong person and then getting out of it.

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In her CV, Letizia has The Right Stuff. Completing her master's degree in journalism in Mexico . Travelled as a journalist. Being from Asturias , Letizia brings into prominence a part of the country that is off the beaten track - it is like Charles married a Welsh lass.

During the interview stage, Letizia proved comfortable enough in the public eye to tell Felipe to "let me finish" during the engagement interview.

As for the proximity, Letizia and Felipe had only less than a year to know each other in private in Madrid . They were both at a point in their lives to settle down.

And their futures were compatible. They were tired of being alone, and start a family, and dedicate themselves as a team to Spain . Although there is always a learning curve to be a royal, Letizia is Spanish, has practice in the media, and was trained in skills that transfer over to being the consort of a future head of state – Direction, Discipline, Drive.

(Here's how classy Eva is. Her response to Felipe and Letizia's announcement was a simple: "I am very happy on their behalf. I wish them good luck," Dagbladet newspaper.)

And one final very important ingredient to get to princesshood. The prince must be ready and willing. Felipe when he was initially seeing Eva Sannum had not reached that point in his life where all his friends were getting married and he was the Last Single Man standing. As John T Molloy mentions in "Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others", men need to enjoy their carefree bachelorhood, to sow some oats. Just because a woman is ready to get married, he may not be. By the time Felipe proposed to Letizia, he was already 35 and ready to be a family man. Likewise, as editor Joanne Leyland pointed out William is just coming into his inheritance from his late mother, thus freedom from Clarence House, to be on his own.

Any man worth his mettle with an important role to play in his country won't cave in under pressure. The press wants a wedding from William, not necessarily a marriage, and the expected christenings and tiaras at State Banquets and Openings of Parliament. Behind all that, William is looking for someone who knows how to sit through the Speech from the Throne and the toasts. And to give her own. It is William who will have to live with his Princess.

It would be sad if William marries Kate at age 25, they have two children, and they divorce at age 35. That would happen if two incomplete people (because at this age, neither William nor Kate are fully developed enough to sustain a happy marriage) head to the altar. Each needs to beef up their respective CVs. They should take their time.