

The Perils of Dating A Royal Divorcee

Contributed by Dr. Janice Seto
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The year began with some very familiar headlines as Sarah, Duchess of York again spoke publicly about the strong bond she continues to share with her former husband, Prince Andrew.

As Dr. Janice Seto reports, Sarah isn't the first person to be cast out from a royal dynasty, but she is in the rare position of apparently wishing to hold onto her old life and love. But history is littered with stories of royal divorce and the difficult transition from the ex-wife to the new.....

Following the article on Royal stepmothers, examining the lives of women who married royal widowers, let's look at the very single woman who marries a man whose first wife is very much alive.

It is never easy to take on a divorced dad. It gets even more complicated when the divorced dad comes with a living ex.

Besides monetary woes like alimony and child support obligations, the stressors piled onto the ordinary second wife include aggressive exes, defiant stepteenagers acting out at your wedding, angry adult children to whom you are the second coming of Anna Nicole Smith, and his relatives calling you by her name. The subject has spawned numerous books, films and websites such as *The Second Wives Club*, *Childless Stepmoms* and *StepWives*, all of which give a fuller, chillier picture of this difficult state of affairs.

The bestsellers listed above can tell you more about the Man on the Street divorced date. Add royal status and a court, and as you can see from the examples below, there are many different types of exes which can cast a shadow over the new life and loves of a divorced royal dad.

1. The Ex Who Will Not Disappear: Sarah Ferguson

Diana said her marriage was crowded. Imagine the herd trampling into your life if you become Prince Andrew's second Duchess of York.

Heading the cast of characters is the Prince's ex-wife Sarah Ferguson.

Fergie is going nowhere. Time after time, in interviews across the world, Sarah stakes her claim to Prince Andrew. She has widely circulated the impression her marriage broke up due to pressure of life within palace walls, rather than the lack of affection which eroded and ultimately destroyed Charles and Diana's always fragile relationship.

In other words, she wants us all to believe Andrew still loves her.

Reinforcing this supposedly-ongoing emotional tie, Fergie refused to detach herself geographically. She still had rooms in

his homes, even nowadays at The Royal Lodge, his inheritance from his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Remember those cringeworthy quotations about the world's happiest divorced couple and their "away games"? (In North America we call that 'Too much information!') Read the subtext of Fergie and the girls never being too far away from their father and if you look at it another way....well, Andrew is always within hailing distance of Fergie.

If this is not a hands-off message to his dates, what is???

If Fergie really wanted to move on with her life, she would emulate the gutsy Jerry Hall. After the actress/model split from Rolling Stones star Sir Mick Jagger, their living arrangements changed very little.

Finally, after Mick interrupted one too many dates, Jerry changed the rules. By making the conscious decision to move on and do what is best for her, Jerry Hall is making her own mark.

If there is any constant in Fergie's life now, it is her public identity vis-a-vis her children and ex-husband. Why else was she standing with Andrew in New York during last year's 9/11 commemoration ceremony?

The leak of her forced seating with the staff at the dinner demonstrates the court resistance to her continued association with the Windsors. The ubiquitous "grey men at the Palace" — the officious royal aides partly blamed by Sarah for the collapse of her relationship with Andrew — would have cheered her marrying her longtime boyfriend, the Italian count Gaddo della Gherardescain. They split in July 2001 and in 2004 Sarah publicly (and not for the first or last time) bemoaned the lack of romance in her life, revealing: "I'm still not dating anyone. It's been two and a half years."

But the marriage never transpired. Clearly, Sarah intends to stay the No. 1 woman in Andrew's life, married or not.

2. The Ex is Popular: HRH Princess Muna al-Hussein in Jordan and HH Princess Alexandra of Denmark, Countess of Frederiksborg:

In her autobiography, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan mentioned the difficulties encountered by a young, optimistic American in adjusting to life as consort to King Hussein II.

Alongside her new life as the King's consort, the woman formerly known as Lisa Halaby also had to confront a daunting new role as sister-in-law to the King's brother Crown Prince Hassan, stepmother to his eight children, and 'stepwife' to two of the monarch's previous wives.

Technically the King was a widower, having lost his third wife, the much loved Queen Alia, the daughter of a diplomatic Jordanian family and mother of three young children, following a tragic helicopter crash.

However, Hussein had two living ex-wives: his first divorced wife was a distant royal cousin, Princess Dina. His second wife, Antoinette Gardener, was barely out of her teens when she met the King during her time as a member of the film crew for Lawrence of Arabia. The couple, who had four children together, divorced after ten years of marriage.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Upon her marriage, Antoinette was known as Princess Muna al-Hussein ("dream of Hussein"). Unlike Queen Noor, she stayed away from the spotlight, preferring to concentrate instead on her children's education. Such discretion earned Muna the respect of the people both during the marriage and after the divorce.

Throughout the King's third and fourth marriages, it is understood he maintained good relations with Princess Muna in Jordan.

As a widow, Queen Noor could have expected to enjoy a similar standing in the future new court of King Abdullah II and Queen Rania as another queen consort, the Belgian Queen Fabiola.

The Spaniard noblewoman did not return to her homeland after Baudoin II died suddenly in 1993. Instead she remains within the centre of the family, now headed by her brother-in-law King Albert II — a royal version of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy to the assassinated President's brother, Bobby Kennedy.

However, shortly before his death from cancer in 1999, King Hussein changed the succession. After 36 years, his brother Hassan was no longer crown prince. Instead the role was passed to King Hussein's eldest son with Muna, Prince Abdullah.

Reading the admittedly complex family tree, it seemed to many that this change was conditional on Noor's eldest son being the successor to Abdullah. This would mean Abdullah and Rania's own son, as well as the present monarch's full brother, Muna's other son Prince Faisal, would be overlooked in the line of succession.

However, King Abdullah is his own man and so it is that he appointed his half-brother Prince Hamzah as his heir upon his ascension.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Noor's eldest son subsequently made a good marriage in 2003 with a distant royal cousin, Princess Noor, whose mother was also from the West. But if observers thought that Queen Noor could exert a great influence within Jordan via her son, it has not proven to be the case.

King Abdullah has spoken of a new generation and a new way of doing things. His wife, Queen Rania — an advocate of poor disenfranchised women who has even appeared on the American chat show Oprah — as well as his brother by Princess Muna and his half-brother by Queen Alia have all been projected as the new face of the Jordanian Royal Family.

However, the ever glamorous Queen Noor and her brother-in-law, Prince Hassan, continue to have a place on the world stage.

In 2004, King Abdullah withdrew the title of crown prince from Noor's son. This was no snub, the King's reason being that he wished to give the young man greater freedom in life (there are shades here of Prince Louis and Prince Jean of Luxembourg).

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}To date, no one has been named in his stead, although the King and Queen now have two sons and two daughters of their own.

Today, Noor spends most of her time in Washington, DC, although she continues to be a regular visitor to her adopted homeland of Jordan.

Meanwhile, Princess Muna, as the King's mother, has increased her visibility within the country as well as internationally. She is, essentially, de facto Queen Mother.

Another popular ex is to be found in Scandinavia.

Until Mary Donaldson married Crown Prince Frederik, the only female royal of the younger generation was the wife of Prince Joachim, the former Alexandra Manley.

This very elegant, smart, and hardworking Eurasian was, for almost a decade, the adored princess of her generation. Keen to be welcomed to her new homeland, Princess Alexandra quickly learnt Danish and committed much time and attention to her adopted country.

She still commands the respect of the Danish people, both for her demeanor during the marriage and her discretion since the divorce.

Unlike Sarah Ferguson — who upon divorcing the Queen's second son in 1996 wrote her autobiography and, as already noted, continues to speak on a regular basis about life inside the royal family — the divorced Princess Alexandra remains mum about why the marriage ended and still carries out official duties.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}She and her sons moved out of Joachim's castle/farm estate and rooms in the royal palace, to a manse in Svanemøllevvej in the Hellerup district of Copenhagen.

As long as she remains in Denmark and single, Alexandra keeps her princess title and a tax-free royal allowance.

Unlike Prince Andrew, who continues to search for new romance behind Palace doors, Prince Joachim has very publicly moved on.

Enter the pretty 29-year-old Marie Cavallier of Geneva who had over the past two years spent many happy times with Queen Margrethe's younger son.

When the couple went public, there were hopes that this was a woman who would make the divorced prince happy again. They both spoke joyfully to the press in the Spring of 2006, the interview adding to the frenzied speculation in the national media, as well as encouraging inevitable comparisons with Alexandra.

Joachim met the exotic Alexandra while on assignment in Hong Kong with Dansk shipping. He was around 25 while she was nearing 30.

After working in finance in Hong Kong and studying in Asia and Austria (her mother's birthplace), Alexandra was ready to settle down.

Unfortunately for the couple, she had only a cursory introduction to Denmark prior to the engagement, and as for him, perhaps he was prematurely committing to married life?

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Now, seasoned by his experiences in life, Joachim was on more familiar ground with Marie Cavallier, a cosmopolitan European.

If the Danish people's respect for Alexandra caused any concerns for Marie Cavallier, the Swiss lady should be reassured by how the princess has sensibly moved on since the divorce.

Alexandra does not follow Sarah's lead with interviews on how chummy she remains with her ex. She and her ex do accompany their sons to important school and court events such as the christening of Crown Prince Frederik and Mary's 'kingaroo' Prince Christian, but that is about it.

Not for Alexandra any joint Christmas cards or family photos. During the summer, each parent goes on separate vacations with Prince Felix and Prince Nicolai.

In the summer of 2006, Alexandra and her new beau Martin Jorgenson handed over the boys to Prince Joachim for his holidays in France at the family's Chateau de Caix.

Princess Alexandra does not discuss her beau, a film photographer, who at 28 is not only younger than her but also younger than her ex-husband. However, they have recently appeared in public together at social events.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Alas, Marie Cavallier recently spoke to the press of her breakup with Prince Joachim in the summer of 2006. Too little time together, too much geographical distance, and too much press attention. (As of December 2006, we learn this story is not yet finished. The couple were spotted in Denmark {for a change!} and Marie Cavallier has hinted it was Joachim who persuaded her to give him another chance. Perhaps this time they will follow the long and leisurely relationship building of his brother Frederik and Princess Mary).

3. The Ex is the Royal One: Princess Margaret and Princess Anne:

It is rare but sometime your beau is not royal but had been married to a royal.

Essentially he is an ordinary citizen returning to private life. Possibly your stepchildren have more money via their mother (than their father) and there may be little financial obligation to them. In return for being spared ongoing press attention, however, the second wife might be the victim of press neglect at important occasions.

Such as obituaries.....

I have in mind the widow of Group Captain Peter Townsend. The first love and well-known ex of Princess Margaret, the divorced Townsend married his second wife, Belgian heiress Marie Luce, and settled on the continent, where they produced a new family.

But this pertinent information does not attract sufficient space in most biographies of the Group Captain. Even Townsend's two sons by his first wife are afforded little mention.

As far as too many writers are concerned, none of them count, which is a pity.

From the ex of a king's daughter to the ex of the queen's daughter and another figure who suffered a similar fate: Sandy Pflueger, a top American equestrienne, married Princess Anne's first husband, Captain Mark Phillips.

The couple have a daughter, Stephanie Phillips, who was born nine months after the wedding. A blessing in disguise, she will be able to live a private life far from the limelight which constantly snares her half-sister, Zara Phillips.

Antony Armstrong-Jones, Earl of Snowdon, is another example of this phenomena. Princess Margaret's ex-husband married Lucy Lindsay-Hogg (who as with Snowdon was entering into a second marriage).

This union produced a daughter, Lady Frances, but the marriage ultimately ended in the divorce courts.

There's a simple lesson for anyone tempted to link up with a divorced royal: In the relationship Olympics with a divorced royal father (or any dad), make sure you get the gold. Even if you may have to share the gold on the podium, ladies, settle for nothing less.

{jumi [includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Of course, you can always go the Smith Jerrod route!

But that's for another day and another article....