

Lance Reventlow:

Misunderstood Millionaire

Despite his immense wealth, Barbara Hutton's son is a level-headed, serious-minded young man, says his starlet girl friend in this exclusive story.

by Jill St. John



Lance Reventlow (right) and Gaston Andrey win race at Elkhart, Wis.



Heiress Barbara Hutton and her son get together only rarely.

I'VE KNOWN Lance Reventlow for three years.

We've dated steadily for nearly a year. But only now do I feel that I understand him.

I don't think many people do. Certainly not the newspapermen who refer to him as "Barbara Hutton's poor little rich boy." Not the phonies who try to befriend him for what they can get out of him. Not his father, Count Kurt Haugwitz-Reventlow, to whom he hasn't spoken in 10 years.

Lance is envied and pitied for his money: envied because people think he can spend any amount whenever and however he pleases; pitied because it has made him lonely and distrustful.

From what I can tell neither is true.

I've never asked him directly whether he really inherited \$1 million on his 21st birthday two years ago, and can draw up to \$500,000 a year in advance on the \$50 million to \$100 million inheritance that someday will supposedly be his.

If this is true it doesn't show in his living.

According to one recent story, he owns a \$200,000 hilltop mansion in Beverly Hills, an airplane, three expensive cars—a Rolls Royce, a Ferrari, and a Scarab—has a cook and butler, and buys me presents that would have made Diamond Jim Brady look like an unemployed orange picker.

What the story failed to mention is that the Rolls Royce is 23 years old and was a gift from his mother; that he'll keep the Ferrari at least five years—he drove his Mercedes six before he turned it in; that the Scarab was built by his own company for professional racing purposes; that the Cessna 310 is used primarily to fly his mechanic-drivers from one race to the next; that his cook and butler work part time, and that the jewelry I wear was purchased almost entirely by myself.

Don't get me wrong. Lance is no pauper. He doesn't pretend to be. "Some people are born with brown eyes. I was born with money," he once said.

He spends his money cautiously. A few months ago, for instance, his company, the Reventlow Automobile Corp.—which builds and races his Scarabs—was invited to participate in a Honolulu competition. When Lance learned the cost of shipping the car to Hawaii, he refused to enter.

He runs his company on a strictly business basis, although he is conscious of his financial advantage. He is no hungry racer who has to accept any competition that promises monetary rewards, or take chances in those he does accept.

Lance spends money on himself even more carefully. Some time ago I practically dragged him to his tailor because he hadn't bought a new suit in months. When I was at Lake Meade, Nev., as hostess and queen of the Sahara Cup Races, he refused to go near a nickel slot machine. He considers gambling a waste of money.

However, no matter how he feels about it, being Barbara Hutton's son makes him the object of money-grabbing schemes. So far no one has put



Jill St. John and Lance have dated a year amid speculation of marriage.

anything over on him. I doubt anyone ever will. I know—from experience!

When I came back from Lake Meade, my heart was set on Lance's buying a cabin cruiser. I kept hinting how much fun some of our friends had with theirs. I even talked him into visiting the Sportsmen's Show in Los Angeles. Just when I thought I'd talked him into placing an order, he grinned. "I can't afford a boat—but I love the way you try to talk me into it," he said.

Most of the schemes directed at Lance don't involve business transactions—unless one calls marriage a business. Wherever we go, he's pursued by attractive, marriage-minded girls and aggressive, prospective mothers-in-law. The fact that I'm with Lance deters few of either category.

WHEN WE first met, Lance used to shun any type of publicity gathering, such as premieres. Gradually I persuaded him to change his attitude. For the sake of my career, I need to be seen in public, with or without Lance. Naturally the fact that I'm with him makes people want to write more about me. Lance realizes this, and while he'll tease me that I don't really want to become an actress, just a movie star, he now goes to publicity functions with comparatively little grumbling.

I can't blame Lance for being somewhat wary of the attention he attracts, and the motives for it. He is never completely sure whether people are interested in him as a human being, or for his social and financial position. Despite this, he has a bigger circle of friends than anyone I know.

His closest pal is Bruce Kessler, also a race driver. Generally speaking, Lance is not impressed by the Hollywood crowd. He once admitted sharing his mother's opinion that "Hollywood society is like going down a sewer in a glass-bottom boat." He does associate with a few entertainers, though—Gary Crosby, singer Jimmy Boyd, and George Burns' and Gracie Allen's son, Ronnie, at whose home we first met.

My initial impression confirmed what I'd been told: he seemed cold, shy, distant. It took me quite a while to find out that he was simply reserved.

I'd heard a lot about Lance's difficult childhood: the headlined custody battle his parents fought over him; the endless stream of stepfathers (after Barbara Hutton divorced Lance's father—she had previously been married to Alexis Mdivani—she became the wife of actor Cary Grant, Prince Igor

Troubetzkoy, Porfirio Rubirosa, and Baron Gottfried von Cramm); the years in boarding school as a ward of the court when his parents couldn't reach an agreement about who should raise him.

Except for a resentment against his father—because of the custody battle and the financial settlement he received from Lance's mother—Lance has developed no feeling of insecurity, harbors no bitterness or disillusionment. He looks at his mother's many marriages with deep concern for her.

Of all her husbands, the only one he cares for is Cary Grant, who has no obligation toward him yet treats him like his own son. Whenever Lance is sick, and he has been plagued by illness since childhood—mostly asthma, which kept him out of the Army—Cary always calls or visits him.

Lance considers himself fortunate in also having found a second mother. Like Cary Grant, she has no obligation toward him, yet Bruce Kessler's mother, Nina, is probably as close to him as I am. Certainly she is with him whenever needed—like the morning he underwent minor surgery last Summer to relieve a sinus condition. The operation was scheduled for 8 a.m. I figured if I got to the hospital by 10, I'd be there before he came out of the anesthetic.

Nina Kessler arrived at 7:30 and stayed all day. Every time Lance is ill and doesn't call her promptly, she'll lovingly bawl him out, no matter who's around, and he loves it.

In spite of seeing little of his own mother, Lance is extremely fond of her. I could tell when we met not long ago.

I was in New York to help publicize "The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker" when Lance came into town from Nassau where he had just won the International Grand Prix as well as the Governor's Cup—the first time in 30 years this has been done by an American. He told me his mother was staying with his cousin, Jimmy Donahue, on Long Island. He wanted us to get acquainted.

Never in my life have I been more scared than during the hour drive to Mr. Donahue's home. "Do you think she'll like me?" I kept asking Lance.

"Of course, she will," he assured me repeatedly. When I persisted, he finally burst out, "Oh, be quiet and stop worrying!"

I found Barbara Hutton to be a warmhearted, charming woman. And I think she approved of me. If she didn't, she put on a most convincing show!

She treated Lance like someone her own age, rather than as a son. And when he was with her,

Lance appeared far more mature than his 23 years.

One reason Lance has become a well-adjusted young man is that despite everything that's happened he has developed a marvelous sense of humor. He has told me many times, "If you can laugh at yourself, you can laugh at anything."

Another reason is a degree of self-sufficiency that makes him independent of others. He can work all day on his cars, by himself. He will read for hours, on every possible subject but particularly medicine.

As a result, he's acquired a good education although he attended only two months of college at Pomona which he considered a sort of "Western Ivy League." He's the brightest boy I've dated.

For someone supposedly born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Lance is extremely capable of looking after himself. The most wonderful room in his hill-top home is the kitchen, which he uses expertly.

One night we had a steak at one of Los Angeles' better restaurants which served a flaming, peppery kind of sauce that looked like Béarnaise, but wasn't. Lance tasted it, smacked his lips, and wondered aloud what ingredients it contained. The next time he cooked dinner for me at his house—he almost always cooks, I never do—we had steak with the identical flavorful sauce.

Lance is pleasant to be with for many reasons. He's tall, handsome, doesn't get drunk, seldom loses his temper, and when he cusses he does it in a foreign language!

His anger blows over quickly. Usually he feels sorry afterward and tries to make up for it with a gift. But contrary to what's been reported by the press, Lance has never given me an expensive fur coat or a 20-carat diamond ring. His presents have included a huge stuffed dog with a card addressed "to a big child," a watch, and a car hi-fi set which he took from his Ferrari.

What are my own feelings toward Lance? They should be quite clear, considering I haven't dated anyone else for months.

However, we have never discussed marriage except once when a columnist reported—mistakenly, as usual—that Lance would inherit \$5 million the day he acquired a wife. "Why don't you marry me for your money?" I teased him.

Replied Lance with a grin, "For that much money I'll do anything—but marry!"

If he ever changes his mind, there's little doubt that he would make a wonderful husband—with or without his money.