

Royalty on the Rocks

For many a princess, the royal road to romance may lead to a dead end—because there just aren't enough princes to go around

By **BILL SURFACE**



Princess Margrethe of Denmark



Princess Margaretha of Sweden



Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands

ONCE UPON A TIME, princes automatically married princesses, and everyone lived happily ever after. Today this fairy-tale existence faces an embarrassing dilemma—the princesses are having a hard time finding proper husbands.

There are so many marriageable European princesses (26) and so few eligible princes (16) that royalty is on the rocks. Even first cousins are linked romantically, and authorized monthly newsletters publicize the merits and availability of princesses.

The marriage plight grew so critical five years ago that the queens of Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark arranged an unprecedented matrimonial "summit conference." But despite their efforts, the problem has worsened. Since the conference, two prize catches, King Baudouin of Belgium and Prince Juan Carlos of Spain, have married, and a third, Crown Prince Constantine of Greece, has become engaged.

Europe's most sensitive princess situation is in the Netherlands, where Queen Juliana repeatedly discusses relinquishing the throne to Crown Princess Beatrix, the oldest of her four spinster daughters.

A likable, down-to-earth woman, Juliana has encouraged Beatrix to feel that "a queen is nobody special." So the princess, a plump, good-natured blonde with gleaming blue eyes, rented a 3½-room apartment and enrolled in law school at the University of Leyden. Juliana was impressed when newspapers ran pictures of Beatrix (or "Trix" as the family calls her) pleasantly walking, talking, or mingling with her fellow students there.

Only it was usually just one student, Jacob

Steensma, a tall, bespectacled, 27-year-old son of a small-town lawyer. He had good grades, no title, and little money. But he and Beatrix soon wanted to get married. "I'm a law student," Trix told the Queen. "I know my rights."

"I'm also a law graduate," the Queen shot back, "and the constitution says a queen must have consent of both chambers of the legislature to marry a commoner. And they would never give consent to that."

Today, however, Beatrix seems to prefer royalty. When photographers surrounded her during a trip to New York, she quipped: "Going to make me look like a cinema star?"

"Want to be one?" a photographer hollered.

"If I was," Beatrix sniggered, "there'd be a very big wedding, and I could marry a tall, handsome prince."

At that time, Queen Juliana was promoting a friendship between Trix and the Duke of Kent. But he wasn't interested. Now, at 25, Beatrix's marriage chances are slimmer than ever. A hereditary weight problem makes her appear much older than her actual age, and at last count there were no acceptable prospects in sight.

PRINCESS MARGARETHA of Sweden has no difficulty in finding boy friends. A robust, six-foot blonde, she can be the life of the party—even though some people say she does it to overcome her shyness.

Recently, five reigning monarchs attending a Dutch anniversary party were extremely reluctant to dance. Finally, however, they did an aloof waltz, then sat down. Bored by it all, Margaretha danced near the Italian band leader and whispered: "How about a twist?" As the music blared out, she pulled Prince Philip away from a startled Queen Elizabeth and out onto the dance floor.

But what really angers King Gustav Adolf is his granddaughter's romances—especially the

one that began when the princess sat down in a booth at a London cocktail lounge and met the piano player, Robin Douglas-Home.

When Margaretha and Home announced that they would be married, the royal family was flabbergasted. Neither Home's hours nor his salary suited them. His combined earnings from piano playing and an advertising-agency job fluctuated between \$84 and \$126 a week.

And as a palace spokesman pointed out: "She'd have to wait up until 2 a.m. for him to come home from the tavern."

So Margaretha now is back in circulation. She has to be; she's pushing 30.

QUITE PROBABLY, Europe's most lonesome young princess is 22-year-old Margrethe, who will succeed her father, King Frederick IX, as ruler of Denmark. She has not been officially linked with anyone, despite the fact that she is a reasonably attractive blue-eyed blonde with dimples and a turned-up nose.

Although she is heir to the throne of the oldest continuous kingdom in Europe, Margrethe strives to be "just an ordinary kid." She is a good horsewoman and athlete (she has high-jumped 3 feet, 10 inches) and has participated in archeological expeditions in Egypt.

Recently her mother, Queen Ingrid, invited several approved young men to a dance in the Amalienborg Palace. Midway through the party, the Queen nudged the King to show him that Daisy, as Margrethe is called, was consistently dancing with the "best boy here." But her enthusiasm soon disappeared. The boy, a count, kept stuffing cotton in his nostrils, but he couldn't completely stop his nosebleed. He ruined Margrethe's pale-blue gown—and his romantic chances.

Oh, well, Prince Charles—heir to the British throne and the biggest catch of all—is now 14 and has graduated to long pants.