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# UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH H.S.H. PRINCE ALBERT OF MONACO

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### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Editor's Note: H.S.H. Prince Albert of Monaco will be married to Charlene Witstock on Saturday, July 2 in Monaco, the second Royal Wedding within months. The Prince is a frequent visitor to Newport, and serves on the Board of Directors of the International Tennis Hall of Fame

### Up Close and Personal with H.S.H. Prince Albert of Monaco

When Newport Seen Travel Correspondent Marion Laffey Fox met Prince Albert II of Monaco in Newport at events commemorating the 50th Anniversary of his mother's famous film, "High Society", she had no idea she would visit him in Europe. However, they kept in touch and true to his invitation of "you have to come to Monaco," she joined a lively group of Kelly family relatives for a remarkably close-up experience.

If the raison d'etre for the festivities was to host the spirited Kellys, (whom he loves), and members of Philadelphia's Vesper Rowing Society (to which he belongs), for a weekend of rigorous ocean rowing competition, there was more to the glam events. It all began on Friday evening when the Prince hosted a splendid cocktail reception in the gilded formal rooms of the Prince's Palace on the hilltop overlooking the harbor. The next night he

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presided over a lively dinner at a charming outdoor bistro called *La Quet*. Another afternoon, **Prince Albert II** graciously received Fox in his private Palace quarters for quiet reflection. *Newport Seen* is privileged to share a selected portion of that special interview.

Q You seem equally at ease as monarch of Monaco and Kelly family cousin. How was that accomplished?

A. I think my mother **Grace Kelly** was instrumental in all of this. She taught us how to be comfortable with family, rules and protocol. I always drew a lot from my family and am proud of my American heritage. When we were all together as a family unit at home, we always spoke English. My family decided it was good to spend time in both places, so I got to know “the cousins” when I was very small and we have remained very close throughout the years. In addition to summers at my grandparents house in Ocean City, I went to *Camp Tecumseh*, a boys’ sports camp in New Hampshire. These were unbelievable summers from the time I was 12 to 17. In 2003 we had big reunion in Philadelphia that was great.

Q. You graduated from **Amherst College**. Why did you decide to go there?

A I probably could have gone anywhere in Europe, but I wanted to go to college in the states. Mom sort of thought it would be better to be in a smaller school so I wouldn’t get lost. The first semester I didn’t sign up for the right courses, but I soon made adjustments. Amherst was a fabulous experience for me because I am so interested in sports: I played soccer, tennis, volleyball and did track. I sang in the choir and was a member of the Glee Club. I’m a big shower singer!

Q. Your mother’s marriage to your father was life-altering event. As a child, did you understand how famous she was? Who came to visit from Hollywood?

A. The fact that she maintained so many friends showed how much she was loved even though she had such a big life change. **David Niven** came pretty regularly as well as **Alfred Hitchcock**, **Cary Grant**, **Gregory Peck**, **Frank Sinatra** and **Kirk Douglas** among others. They respected her life, but we always had fun. They were very much part of her life when I was young, I still maintain a tie to the entertainment industry. In fact, **Quincy Jones** and I share the same birthday – March 14th.

Q Twenty-five years after her death, there is still an insatiable interest in your mother?

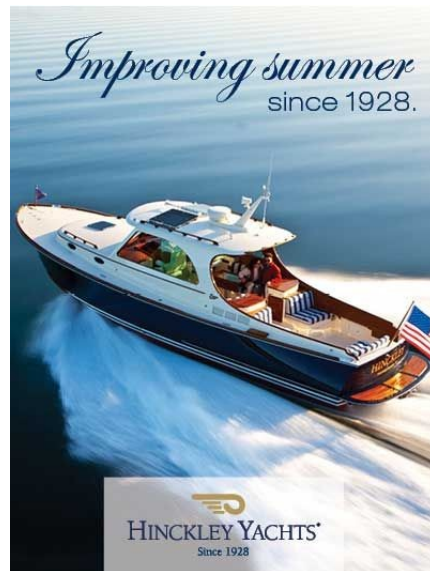
A. I didn’t realize she touched so many people’s lives until she passed away. There were fleeting moments – touching moments – where we got calls from all over the world, including Australia, where she had never been. Her dying was an intense shock. You know, you think you’re grown up and on your way – but it left us with a big void.

Q How does your being half-American - with so much exposure to real life in the U.S. - influence your reign?

A. I think every experience you go through or are able to acquire – you gain something that you are able to apply to everyday life. Ask any CEO what you learn in and out of classrooms make you think differently. In addition, having been an Olympian in Bobsledding and participating in extreme sports in 10 World Cups taught me a lot about myself. From all these experiences you make connections work and then enjoy them.

Q. How were you prepared for your new responsibilities? As a young monarch what do you do?

A. Like for many jobs, this is a long process. You look over people’s shoulders. I worked for my father for a long time. Then suddenly, it happens and you can’t help but feel you’re not completely ready. But then you’re put in front of the situation and have to say I’m in charge. Then, you step up to the plate and take a swing.



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Q. What impact did the legacy of your famous grandfather, **Prince Albert I** who traveled the world and founded the *Oceanographic Institute* have on your well-known environmental focus?

A. He was an inspiration for me. Not only his legacy, but his vision. To read his writings 100 years later is amazing. He was among the first to be concerned about starting to protect whales and eco-systems. He wasn't a scientist but surrounded himself with marine scientists. The research they did on 28 different expeditions were adventurous and ground-breaking. They charted sea depth and climactic conditions from the Azores to Spitzbergen. To pay tribute to him in 2005 we went to Spitzbergen and in 2006 eight of us made a run to the North Pole with dog sleds and three tents. It wasn't to add a notch to my bedpost. I love to travel to remote places but hey, it's dangerous and we were on an ice cap that was only a couple of feet thick. You don't go to those places unless you have a reason and want to find out something. . I wanted to see what was happening and add my voice. Let's pay attention to the climate and what is happening or we will be in a lot of trouble.

Q Aside from your great grandfather's work – were there any other influences that pointed you in this protecting the environment?

A. When you have the oceanographic Institute a few blocks away, you can't help but be interested in what he started. I can recall as a kid were the posters that came with the National Geographic magazines. One in particular was entitled: "How Man Pollutes His World." It stuck in my mind and I knew someday I wanted to do something about that. Then I became more and more aware.

Q What's the *Prince Albert II Foundation* all about?

A. My dad was involved in a lot of projects around the Mediterranean and marine pollution. He was one of the first to start tree planting since the late 70s we participated in planting more than 150,000 trees in *Monaco, Tunisia and Lebanon*.and even got involved in projects in *Bulgaria* and *Algeria*. So I thought it was the right time to do a little more and set up the *Prince Albert II Foundation*. In the first year we received over 150 requests for assistance so we know other people have similar concerns.

Q How does that segue into the Billion Trees project?

A. We were asked to by the **United Nations** to be patrons and participate. It's ambitious but vital.

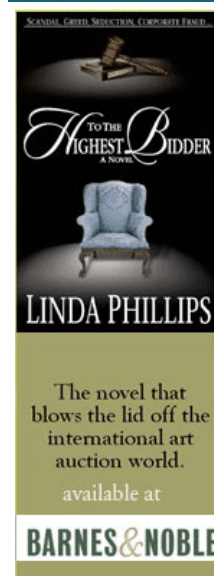
Q Tourism is increasing enormously in Monaco? What's happening on that front?

A. It is definitely growing especially with Asians such as Chinese, Japanese and Indians who have travel budgets and are coming to Europe. The Cruise Ship Industry is also important and part of the reason we created the new jetty was to protect the harbor and create a deepwater place for cruise ships to come. We are also working to make Monaco attractive for individual and off-season travelers.

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