

A MEETING WITH QUEEN NOOR - BY Rochelle Lash (Social Column)

An eager group of diplomats, academics, philanthropists and even a few social butterflies came out to mingle with [Queen Noor] of Jordan last week at a reception and concert at Pollack Hall.

Her Majesty was the guest of honour at the [Evening for Peace] which raised more than \$150,000 for McGill University's [Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building], a work-study venture for both Jews and Arabs which is meant to nurture peace while improving conditions for the poor in the Middle East. The program involves people Jordanians, Israelis and Palestinians cooperating on social issues, human rights, and low-cost housing. It soon will involve other countries. PARAGRAPH

Queen Noor is the international spokesperson for the program and the [King Hussein Memorial Scholarship Fund], named for her late husband, supports it.

"My husband would be smiling down on us because we are trying to bring people together," Queen Noor told the audience.

Everyone came together for Mideast peace, but I agonized over other issues, as well.

Would it be considered trite, even superficial, if I checked out what Queen Noor was wearing?

Here we had a real-life queen, and not a frumpy, aging dowager, either. Beautiful and brilliant, Queen Noor was born [Lisa Halaby], the all-American daughter of a Swedish mother and a rich 'n' powerful Syrian father.

Princesses, put away thine nail polish and heed this tale!

Queen Noor maintained a demanding travel schedule and a minute-by-minute touring protocol during her two-day stay in Montreal. She worked, my dears, day and night, and still managed to be poised, patient and relaxed. And no bimbo, either. She's highly intelligent and impressively articulate.

Noor is 5'10", 48 years old, with a sincere, sensuous smile and a deep, hearty laugh. She's strong and athletic, with sturdy legs, good shoulders and a slim waist. (There used to be an expression: "She could have been a coat model.")

She arrived at Dorval Airport one night last week wearing a parka, after she checked into her hotel, she slipped into a black pants suit for a small night-time reception of McGill people. On the day she left, she arose at 5 a.m. to catch a plane. "All I've seen of Montreal is the tour of the university," she told me.

And was the Evening for Peace a feast fit for a queen? In case you were home watching Who Wants to be a Millionaire and all torn up because you weren't there, here's the poop. The \$1000-or-more donors were treated to drinks and rather frugal nibbles by trendy Primadonna restaurant in a reception room at McGill's concert venue, Pollack Hall.

During her stay Noor also attended an exclusive lunch for about 40 supporters of the Middle East program given by [Helene (ACUTE) Desmarais] at Power Corporation. Her ensemble? A dark beige coat over a pale tweed suit. At the evening reception, Her Majesty was simple and practical. Not a trace of eye make-up or lipstick and only milky white nail polish. She was sleek in a midnight blue wool cape over a matching suit with discreet ruffles at the wrist, waist and neck. Black kid pumps and dark stockings. "Which designer?" I asked her. "The suit is ancient," she said with a laugh. "I forget!."

At the beginning of her reign, Noor had been criticized by the Jordanian establishment for wearing showy jewellery and fancy Paris fashions, but this night she was understated and businesslike. No tiaras. No glitter. She sported a plain gold wedding band, small diamond earrings and a hefty brooch with a bird motif. "Any significance to the bird?" I probed. "It's a dove for peace," Queen Noor replied.

Halaby had been a Princeton cheerleader, but tossed away her pom-poms when she entered the first woman's class at that Ivy League university. With a B.A. in architecture and urban planning, she joined Royal Jordanian Airlines and worked on design projects.

Girls, have you heard the lifestyle statistic that as many as 70 per cent of married people met at work? Well, take note that the 25-year-old Halaby accompanied her very well-connected father on a business trip to Jordan and that is where she met [King Hussein], who still was bereft over the death of his third wife. (Daddy just happened to be president of Pan-Am Airlines and the head of the [Federal Aviation Administration] under U.S. [President Kennedy].)

Noor became a model queen. She converted to Islam, bore four children, and worked on many causes in Jordan, including child care, women's advancement, conservation and culture. Internationally, she succeeded [Princess Diana] in the fight to ban landmines and [Prince Charles] as president of United World Colleges.

[TRADING PLACES:] After [Lisa Halaby] had secured a B.A. at Princeton, she wanted to go on to an M.A. in journalism, but she married [King Hussein] instead. Thus, your social columnist, [Princess Rochelle], has something that Queen Noor doesn't have!

Would she want to trade places?

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