



## THE AMERICAN FOUNDATION OF SAVOY ORDERS

### TWELFTH ANNUAL SAVOY HISTORY LECTURE REPORT



*"Life and Memories of a Royal Princess"*

As recounted in the recent publication:

*La Mia Vita, I Miei Ricordi*

By HRH Princess Maria Pia of Savoy

An informal talk by the Princess  
With the participation of her husband,  
HRH Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme  
and  
Alain Elkann

October 16, 2014  
The Knickerbocker Club



## AMERICAN FOUNDATION OF SAVOY ORDERS

Twelfth Annual Savoy History Lecture – October 16, 2014

*H.R.H. Princess Maria Pia of Savoy: “My Life and Memories”  
and  
H.R.H. Prince Michel de Bourbon Parme: “A Prince in Turmoil”*



On Thursday, October 16, 2014, the 12th edition of the “Savoy History Lecture Series,” sponsored by the American Foundation of Savoy Orders, Incorporated, at the Knickerbocker Club in New York City, featured H.R.H. Princess Maria Pia of Savoy and her husband H.R.H. Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme, who graciously traveled from their home in Paris expressly for this event. Savoy Foundation President Marco Grassi chose the extraordinary life of Princess Maria Pia for this installment of the History Series, with the participation of her husband H.R.H. Prince Michel de Bourbon-

Parme, whose adventure-filled life was also profiled. Both are descendants of dynastic royal families that played leading roles in Italian history. Theirs is a truly remarkable story, encompassing momentous historical events spanning many decades – events in which they participated and witnessed. Each recalled personal experiences, in words and photographs, in two recently published memoirs of 2010: *La Mia Vita e i Miei Ricordi* “My Life and Memories” by H.R.H. Princess Maria Pia of Savoy and *Un Prince dans la Tourmente* “A Prince in Turmoil” by H.R.H. Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme.





The moderator, Mr. Alain Elkann, is a prominent cultural and social figure in European circles. Also, as a personal friend of the Prince and Princess, he was able to gently elicit, in an informal style, memories of the princess's life with her father and her relationship with him and with her mother. The interview was followed by questions from the audience. Comments by the Prince and Princess were accompanied by slides of photographs from their books projected on a large screen. A standing-room only audience, including the Princess's sister, H.R.H. Princess Maria Beatrice of Savoy, enjoyed the illustrated presentation, after which guests were treated to a cocktail reception and sumptuous sit-down dinner with a full capacity crowd at the elegant club dining room. H.R.H. Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia also was present in the audience in enthusiastic support of his mother and step-father.

Princess Maria Pia is the older sister of the Savoy Orders Grand Master H.H.H. Prince Victor Emmanuel of Savoy and the eldest daughter of the last king and queen of Italy, Umberto II and Maria-José. The Savoy dynasty traces its roots to the early Middle Ages and held, at various times, territorial dominion over large parts of Northern Italy, Switzerland and France. The nationalist ferment of the mid-nineteenth century 'Risorgimento' movement found its symbol and leader in a Savoy who became Italy's first King as Victor Emmanuel II. When Maria Pia was born, her father was Crown Prince of Italy. As a result of the tumultuous events culminating in the armistice signed by Italy and the subsequent end of World War II, Prince Umberto succeeded his father Victor Emmanuel III as the fourth King of united Italy. Rather than contest the controversial results of a 1946 referendum and risk civil disorder, King Umberto chose to depart his native land with his family in voluntary exile. He died in 1983, a universally respected and admired figure.

The evening's format of questions from the moderator and audience and the royal couple's fascinating reflections on people, anecdotes and memories of their cosmopolitan lives reaffirmed the elegance and discretion which they have demonstrated through sometimes difficult historical events and complicated family histories.



## Highlights from the Lecture and *La Mia Vita – I Miei Ricordi*

### *1934-1954 I Miei primi vent'anni (1934-1954 My first twenty years)*



Princess Maria Pia's 191-page coffee table book, *La Mia Vita – I Miei Ricordi* provides a pictorial record and commentary on the Casa Savoia, as well as relating a very personal memory of Princess Maria Pia's life during a turbulent period in Italian history, which profoundly affected her family and her country. Throughout her story, as a mother, wife, writer and journalist, she sees herself as an ordinary woman and doesn't feel nostalgia for the past. As a member of the Savoia royal family, she has always been target of the media frenzy, but she has lived a life without scandals, focusing on her family, charitable projects and travel.

Princess Maria Pia's book is divided into the major segments of her life: "1934-1954 I Miei primi vent'anni" (My first twenty years); "La Mia famiglia" (My family); 1943-1945 Dalla guerra alla pace (From war to peace); Gli anni con Alexandre (My years with Alexandre); "Vita con Michel" (Life with Michel); "Jet-set, matrimoni e viaggi" (Jet-set, marriages and travels); "Hobby e attività" (Hobbies and activities); "I Savoia e la Sacra Sindone" (The Savoy Family and the Holy Shroud).



*With her Mother and Father  
at Raconnigi Castle, at 2 years old,  
1936*



*On the day of her First Communion  
with her parents and siblings  
May 10, 1943, Rome*

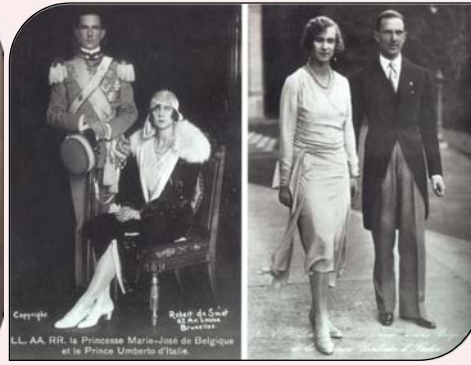


*In the arms of her father at  
Villa Rosebery, Naples, 1935*

## *"La Mia famiglia" (My family)*



*The future King Umberto II a few months old with his sisters Jolanda and Mafalda and his parents*



*Official portraits of her parents during their engagement*



### *Memories of childhood*

She remembers her donkey ride and her friends [as seen in photos on page 3.] Her early life as a royal child—her grandfather was the king of Italy, her father was the Crown Prince and her mother was the daughter of the Queen of Belgium—revolved around the various palaces of Racconigi Quirinale and Palazzo Reale.

### *Memories of her grandparents, King Victor Emmanuel III and Queen Elena*

"He was very small and suffered from rickets because of vitamin C deficiency. Her grandmother, Queen Elena, was very sweet and caring."

### *Memories of life with her father*

"He always had a very positive attitude, was concerned about their studies and never thought about his own problems in front of the children and visited them very often."

### *Memories of her mother, Queen Maria José*

"She was an intellectual and always carried books with her and was engrossed in her books." She wrote the 3 book compendium of the history of the House of Savoy "Le Origini di Casa Savoia."

### *The most vivid memory of her childhood*

To be separated from my father during the war when, at age 8, she left for Switzerland for two years and returned to Italy in August of 1945. She remembers seeing a war torn Italy upon her return and signs that had been put up indicating "US War Zone" which was shocking to her.



*With King Umberto II in Gstaad. Winter 1956*



*Queen Maria José and with Prince Victor Emmanuel and grandchildren. Merlinge, August 1964*



*With the King in Paris in the 1960s.*



## *Gli anni con Alexandre "My years with Alexandre"*



*With Alexandre at a gala party before the wedding, Cascais, Castello di Guimarães February 10, 1955*



*With Alexandre and our Parents at our Wedding, Cascais, February 12, 1955*

In 1946, Princess Maria Pia left Italy with her family: she lived with her father and sisters in Cascais, Portugal and came to adulthood in Switzerland. In 1954, she met and later married Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia in 1955. They moved to Paris and kept in touch with other European royal families and artists. In 1958, she gave birth to fraternal twins (Prince Dimitri and Prince Michael of Yugoslavia). In 1963, two more twins were born (Prince Sergius and Princess Helene of Yugoslavia). They were together for thirteen years until their consensual divorce in 1967. She has wonderful memories of that period:

fun, travel, vacations with her children who filled her life with a thousand commitments. Even the end of the marriage was serene and amicable and both the Princess and Prince Alexandre were in complete agreement over the terms of the separation and so they parted with no disagreements. She was always surrounded by the love of her family: husband, parents, in-laws. In 2003, the Princess remarried. Her second husband is Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme, who has enjoyed a distinguished military, motor-racing and business career. They now spend their winters in Palm Beach, Florida.



*With Alexandre and twins Dimitri and Michel, Versailles, Christmas 1958*



*With Dimitri and Michel on the snow of Courchevel. Winter 1962*



*With her sons Dimitri and Michel. Paris, July 18, 2008*

## *Vita con Michel "Life with Michel"*

Scion of one of Europe's most distinguished and historic families, H.R.H. Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme's life reads like a true adventure story. Fleeing Vichy France with his family to New York in 1940, Prince Michel found himself three years later, as part of an elite OSS-sponsored unit that parachuted behind enemy lines in aid of the French Resistance. The war in Europe had hardly ended when Prince Michel volunteered again – now for service with the French military in Indo-China. Taken prisoner and finally de-mobilized more than a year later, Prince Michel put aside his

various military decorations and devoted himself to more sporting, but no less perilous, endeavors. During the next three decades, the Prince distinguished himself as a successful businessman, accomplished racing driver and sailor. Among other competitions, he participated in the "24 Hours" of Le Mans and the 'Tour de France'. In the 1960's, the Prince helped develop the "Zodiac" from its original function as an inflatable, provisional life-boat into the highly versatile and dependable sea-going craft that has become ubiquitous and a great commercial success.



*In the arms of his mother Margaretha, Princess of Denmark on his Baptism 1926.  
To her right is Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, his godmother  
and Princess Maria Pia's grandmother*



*Michel at 6 years old. 1932*



*Michel with his parents and brothers. 1931*



*Michel with Jean, Grand Duke of  
Luxembourg, Fischbach, 1945.*



## *Jet-set, matrimoni e viaggi "Jet-set, marriages and travels"*

Throughout these years the Princess traveled widely on several continents befriending a remarkable spectrum of prominent figures in the political, financial and artistic worlds with whom she has shared experiences and ideas, and with many of whom she remains in contact to this day. One can fairly say that Princess Maria Pia of Savoy has been at the very center of the international social stage for the past five decades. In the 60s, she was a model for Vogue and made the best of her writing abilities as a journalist for Novella 2000 magazine. Salvador Dalì, a close friend of hers, was one of the artists she interviewed.





## *Hobby e attività “Hobbies and activities”*

### *Life in America*

She expressed how much she likes America. It is very easy in Florida. She and Prince Michel enjoy living casually and quietly in Florida. The Prince enjoys golfing, sailing, fishing.

### *Private Question: Do you cook?*

“Yes, I cook because I am a mother.” She studied at a cooking academy in Paris but Prince Michel interjected that Prince Dimitri is a good cook.



The Princess supports an association fighting against school dropouts and the Preservation Foundation, promoting the preservation of the historic, architectural and cultural heritage of her adopted town of Palm Beach, Florida, where she resides with her husband for half of the year.

"She taught us the love for literature," Maria Pia says of her mother, Queen Maria José. The princess still has this passion: apart from her autobiography, she wrote the preface to *Vita di Corte in Casa Savoia* (*Life at Court in the House of Savoy*) by her sister H.R.H. Maria Gabriella of Savoy, published in 2005.



## *Savoia e la Sacra Sindone "The Savoy Family and the Holy Shroud"*



In the last chapter of her book the Princess briefly discusses the history of the Savoy dynasty with its origins dating back to the XI century: The founder and first count of Savoy was Umberto the Whitehanded (died circa 1048), who was followed by counts and dukes who later expanded and consolidated their domains. The Savoys had a key role in the wars between France and Spain in the fifteenth century. Eventually becoming sovereigns, the Savoys were key protagonists of Italian history and accomplished under King Victor Emmanuel II the unification of Italy.



From the fifteenth century, the Savoy family have been custodians of the Holy Shroud, first kept in their Savoy capital of Chambery and later moved to a Cathedral in Turin in the Royal Chapel specially dedicated to it. By bequest



upon his death, her father King Umberto II gave this relic to Pope John Paul II for the Vatican. In this section of her book, the Princess reflects on her spirituality and her belief in an entity the guides the actions of our lives and protects us every day. The Princess also comments on the many Blessed personages of the Royal House of Savoy.



On 18 October 1983, the Princess donated to Cardinal Ugo Poletti, Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome, the Rosa D'Oro (The Golden Rose), which belonged to her grandmother, Queen Elena, who received it from Pope Pius XI in March 1937 for her works of charity, and for her courage and selflessness demonstrated especially during the earthquake of Messina in 1908. The Golden Rose is awarded during a ceremony, instituted by the popes since the year 1096, which takes place on the fourth Sunday of Lent. The Pontiffs deliver the Golden Rose to a sovereign or a shrine as a sign of particular distinction. It was originally given to a king or queen, but starting from the middle of the eighteenth century exclusively to the sovereign.



## *Un Prince dans un Tourmente "A Prince in Turmoil"*

*"I have served in three armies: the American, the British and French armies."*



Prince Michel de Bourbon-Parme's memoir, *Un Prince Dans La Tourmente (A Prince in Turmoil)* details his adventurous life and experiences being parachuted into occupied France in World War II and then later into Vietnam. Prince Michel provides some interesting details of his family and childhood as well as his later dealings with the Shah of Iran. The majority of the book however concerns his experiences as a captive in French Indochina. It is illustrated with some beautiful family photos of the Prince with his parents, his sister the future Queen of Romania and his cousin Prince Jean of Luxembourg. Michel de Bourbon-Parme is a Knight of the Legion of Honor, the highest military award by the French government, and has received the War Cross and the Military Cross.

Prince Michel was born March 4, 1926 in Paris. He is the third child of René Prince of Bourbon-Parme (brother of Empress Zita) and Princess Margarethe of Denmark, daughter of Prince Valdemar of Denmark and Princess Marie of Orleans, granddaughter of King Christian IX of Denmark. Her older sister is Princess Anne who became by marriage Queen of Romania. Married first to the Princess Yolande de Broglie-Revel, he remarried to Princess Maria Pia of Savoy in 2003. They now spend their winters in Palm Beach, Florida. They have seven children between them: She has four and he has three, all from their previous marriages.



The Prince served in three armies: the US, the British and the French armies and survived his dangerous missions. In 1940, the family of Prince Michel was driven from France by the Nazis and settled in New York. At 17, Prince enlisted in the US Army. Spotted by the OSS (forerunner of the CIA), he was sent to England where he joined the top secret unit of Jedburgh commandos. With companions he was parachuted into the Massif Central in Vichy France in June 1944. After World War II, Prince Michel volunteered for service in

French Indochina where he was taken prisoner in August 1945. He managed to escape after 8 months of captivity.

Demobilized at age 20, having already lived several lives, the Prince distinguished himself as a successful businessman, accomplished racing driver and sailor during the next three decades. Among other competitions, he has participated in the "24 Hours" Le Mans and the 'Tour de France'. In the 1960's, the Prince helped develop the "Zodiac" from its original function as an inflatable, provisional life-boat into the highly versatile and widely used dependable sea-going craft.





# *Highlights of the 2014 Savoy Lecture*











*\*Le Menu\**

**Lobster Bisque**  
Crème Fraîche & Brandy Froth  
Chateau les Tuileries, 2011

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**Mediterranean Bronzino & Prince Edward Island Mussels**  
Shellfish Tomato Reduction & Brocolini

Cote du Rhone  
Vidal Fleury, 2011

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**Tiramisu**  
Tia Maria Anglaise

Café

Thursday, October 16, 2014



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Without these, this event would not have been possible:*

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*We are pleased that the following members and friends attended or contributed to the Savoy Foundation's 12th Annual Savoy Lecture:*

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H.H.H. Prince Michel Bourbon-Parme  
H.R.H. Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia

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***Princess Maria Pia of Savoy's Book "La Mia Vita-I Mei Ricordi" is available for purchase for \$75.00 at the Savoy Foundation Office.***

***Please call 212-972-1100, ext. 245 for more information.***

*By Larissa Van Duser  
Photography by Daphne Youree*