

Truckin' for Good

Dubai's young socially conscientious Haya Bint Al Hussein show-jumped at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia but now she's helping the World Food Program and the U.N. overcome the obstacle of world hunger. She sat down with WL in this exclusive interview to discuss this and her love – of all things – trucks.



Princess Haya's truck driver's license has come in handy at the WFP.

act either as individuals or by forcing our governments to give these organizations the tools they need. It is important to make people recognize that their small solutions, small steps will make a difference..

WL: The WFP was the beneficiary of the Mosaic Foundation Gala this year. How was that?

HRH: I am so grateful to the Mosaic Foundation for dedicating their 10th anniversary gala dinner to WFP. Through their work, the members of the Foundation have harnessed the power of giving as a real force for good in the world.

WASHINGTON LIFE: How did you get involved with the World Food Program (WFP)?

HRH PRINCESS HAYA BINT AL HUSSEIN: I was approached by the previous WFP director, James Morris, whom I have huge respect for, and of course the post was an enormous honour coming from an organization so well known for delivering on the ground when needed and Josset Sheeran, the new WFP Executive Director, is doing an amazing job and I salute her for her enthusiasm and dedication. Actually I found hunger before hunger found me. My late mother (HM Queen Alia), a year before she died, started to work on a dream of hers which was to create an NGO specially geared towards the hungry. Unfortunately with her passing, the dream died too. Until about 15

yrs ago when I started working with my father to make her legacy, her dream come true, by the creation of the first food relief NGO in the Arab World Tikyet Um Ali.

WL: What's the biggest challenge to providing children the food they need?

HRH: Apathy. The biggest challenge is man's inertia to his fellow man and to the children of the world. We have to awaken the sleeping giant which is the moral conscience of the world and try to make individuals realize that they cannot simply devolve their individual responsibility on issues such as hunger, to their government.

We also need to help people to recognize that this problem is beatable. 'We the people' must

I applaud them.

WL: You once said in an interview, "achievements are not because of who [one is] but what [one] can do." How can people like you in the spotlight use fame for positive change?

HRH: The best advice I can give from personal experience is to forget the spotlight altogether, it confuses you with your direction, and as long as you try to stay within its bright circle you forget to light the darkness that surrounds it..

WL: We've read that your father, King Hussein, insisted that you learn sports' inner workings.

HRH: My father realized that I never grew out



Princess Haya with her husband HH Sheikh Mohammad.

of my dream to become an Olympic athlete, which started when I was six years old. He wanted me to be clear on the commitment and the discipline that accompanies that life. So, like any loving, caring father, he insisted on my finishing university first; that was a pre-condition to continuing training. Once in training, I was only allowed to perform. My equestrian career counted as public duty, and I could only do public duty for the royal family with specific permission from my trainers. I think my father was very much aware of the fact that the Olympic Games was not a game, or something to play at doing; he was realistic about my chances and insisted that I be totally serious about achieving my goals.

WL: How does you and your husband Sheikh Mohammed's love of equestrian pursuits affect your relationship?

HRH: Horses balance us. They are a means for us to express ourselves; when we are around horses, we are our most genuine selves. There are people in the world who have a destiny or a fate or a link with something in life. We have a link to horses. We were born somehow attached to them. He is one of best long distance riders in the world, and this endurance is very illustrative of his character.

WL: In addition to WFP, you are heavily involved in health care. Is this a legacy

to your late father's objective to position Jordan as a leading health destination in the Arab World?

HRH: My belief that the fields of both health and education are the benchmarks for any evolving nation, very much came from my father. I grew up when he was creating the industrial boom in Jordan in the '80s, which is something very similar to what Dubai is going through now. The hospitals' infrastructure dictated even the road works. That made a huge impression on me. My husband Sheikh Mohammed has asked me to develop the health strategy for Dubai. I am working with the Department of Health and Medical Services in Dubai and the Ministry of Health. It's original and inspiring work, because unlike any other sector in Dubai, this is an area that cannot be viewed as exclusively a problem of the state or approached as a business opportunity for the country. It's a strategy for health that will serve the whole region and indeed the world.

WL: What's with truck driving? It's not exactly something a princess' occupation.

HRH: When I was a kid I told my father that "when I grow up I want to become a king or a truck driver"! I developed a passion for heavy machinery – cars and trucks. I got my truck driving licence because I needed to understand how to ship a live cargo and be able to do so myself. In particular I needed to transport the horses for competitions. After I got my licence I was made President of the land transport union in Jordan. In actual fact it's important to always realize they [truck drivers] are the vein and artery network of any nation. Amazingly my qualification as a truck driver has also been one of the main attributes in working with the UN because I understood many of the logistics needed in emergency response situations. From growing up with the truck driving union, I have no trouble with the terminologies used in dealing with emergency situations. After I got my license, I was made president of the land transport union in Jordan. Since then, I have spent some of my happiest times with the truck driving community

“[TRUCK DRIVERS] are the vein and artery network of any nation. I have fun with them; they are the most genuine people I know.”

in Jordan – they treat me like their younger sister. [Truck drivers] are the vein and artery network of any nation. I have fun with them; they are the most genuine people I know.

WL: What are some personal non-philanthropic goals have you set for yourself?

HRH: I am determined to qualify for the world championship games in Kentucky [the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games] in 2010 and the Olympic Games in London 2012. Also, I'd like to get a *PADI* [Professional Association of Diving Instructors] license, because I cannot believe that I have lived next to the sea for four years and can only snorkel. I also want to get private flying lessons and have been looking at doing a Ph.D. online, in the field of human development.

WL: What are some of your favorite things to do in Dubai?

HRH: There is so much to do in Dubai – enjoying some time on the lovely sandy beaches or being able to walk through the *souk* in the *Madinat Jumeirah*. The safe, multicultural atmosphere of the city provides for unique experiences, from the art galleries and concerts to going *falconing* in the desert and having a traditional meal in Bab Al Shams. **WL**



In 2000, Princess Haya competed in the Sydney Olympics, riding her late father's mare 'Lucilla II', and was nominated by the delegation to be Jordan's Flag Bearer in the Opening Ceremony. © Pierre Costabadi