

A minor royal wedding - but no showboating romance; Princess Eugenie, youngest daughter of Sarah Ferguson and Prince Andrew, has coped with her share of scandal and strife. Her wedding to long-term boyfriend Jack will bring her a 'pillar of support,' writes

Julia Molony Sunday Independent August 26, 2018

As details of their wedding emerge, there have been grumbles from some circles about the scale and ambition of the plans. After all, Eugenie is only a minor royal, and undertakes no official duties. Nor is she paid from the privy purse. In 2016 it was reported that Prince Andrew had put a request to the Queen that his girls be brought on to the payroll, but it was turned down.

Yet Eugenie seems to be grasping her moment in the spotlight with both hands. When she and Brooksbank wed, the ceremony will be held at Windsor Castle and 1,500 members of the public will be invited into the grounds. Eugenie, observed one acidic commentator, is going for the "full-throttle, trumpet-tootling extravaganza, complete with all the royal trimmings". But will the world care when "Princess Nobody takes Joe Soap to be her lawful wedded hubs"? Despite the grand ceremony, Eugenie cannot hope to command anywhere near the attention that was lavished on her cousin, Prince Harry, and his new bride at their wedding earlier this year. But her seven-year relationship with Brooksbank is no showboating romance. It seems that Eugenie has quietly been building a solid and stable relationship to carry her through the pressures of life in the public eye.

For someone so young, 28-yearold Eugenie already knows a thing or two about crises. Her parents, warm but hapless, have both invited calamity into their lives more than once. It seems strange to suggest that in them, Eugenie has an enviable role-model for solid partnership. And yet, despite their flaws and the failure of their own marriage, Fergie and Andrew share a friendship that many long-married couples might envy. Through bankruptcy, scandal, and disgrace they have never flagged in their commitment to each other and to their girls. Loyalty, above all, and forgiveness appear to be the abiding principles that hold them together.

"We've been through some incredibly stressful times together as a family," Eugenie's older sister Beatrice told Hello magazine recently, springing to her mother's defence, "and every single minute she created joy. I am so lucky that I get to learn from her every single day. I'm inspired by her ability to give, even when she's going through something hard."

Like Eugenie and Jack, Fergie and Andrew grew up together. They'd been friends in childhood, and were first photographed in each other's company at a polo match, then both aged 10. Sarah Ferguson remembers sneaking away from sporting events to "play tag with like-minded truants - including Prince Andrew, who was just my age". They fell out of touch, but were re-introduced as adults by Princess Diana, who invited Sarah to a party at Windsor Castle where Prince Andrew was present. Although Prince Andrew later said that "it was at Ascot that the whole thing took off". They married in 1986 after a sixmonth engagement. 100,000 members of the public turned up to wish the couple well and they held their reception at Claridges hotel. Two years later, their first daughter Beatrice was born, followed, in 1990 by Eugenie.

By that time, however, the marriage was already under strain. "I married a sailor," Fergie later lamented in an interview with Piers Morgan in 2011, "and I got a prince." Indeed, for the first five years of their married life, the demands of Andrew's naval career meant that the couple saw each other for just 40 days out of every year.

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