

H.S.H. FRANZ JOSEF II OF LIECHTENSTEIN AND THE IOC

With the recent death of H.S.H. Franz Josef II, the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, the entire sports movement, and the IOC in particular, have lost one of their most eminent and respected members.



On 22nd February 1982, IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch went to Liechtenstein and was received at the Castle of Vaduz, From l. to r. : Mr Peter Ritter, the then NOC President, the Reigning Prince Franz Josef II, the IOC President, Mr Hilmar Ospelt, the principality's Minister of Sport and Mr Rudolf Schädler, then NOC Secretary-General.

Co-opted into the IOC at the age of 30 in 1936, Prince Franz Josef II was a member for 44 years, which constitutes one of the longest ever active careers within the IOC. The fact that, despite his numerous and weighty responsibilities, he managed to attend twenty-three IOC Sessions testifies to the assiduity, interest and conscientiousness he devoted to a mandate to which he was deeply attached.

H.S.H. Franz Josef, the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, entered the IOC at a time when his country's NOC, founded in 1935, was appearing for the first time on the Olympic stage at the 1936 Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. He was subsequently associated with all the major events

in Olympic history for almost half a century, and was thus able to follow its development and make his own mark upon it.

While the reserve imposed upon him as Reigning Prince was naturally reflected in the discretion of his remarks at IOC plenary sessions, all those who had the honour and privilege of coming into contact with him and seeking his advice could appreciate and admire his good sense and the finesse of his reasoning; the soundness of his judgement and deep knowledge of the issues dealt with; the breadth and conviction of his views and his real devotion to the Olympic cause, which accorded both with his upbringing and his temperament. He was, in the fullest sense of the term, one of the "wise men" of the Olympic Movement, and one of its firmest supporters.

Nor could one fail to associate with his activity in the service of Olympism his admirable and charming wife Princess Gina, who through her distinction and vivacious spirit was one of the «grand ladies» of Olympism, and whose presence lent the Olympic family particular lustre. Furthermore, the royal couple always showed a keen interest in the promotion of sport in the Principality of Liechtenstein and in the beneficent activities of its NOC.

After becoming an honorary IOC member in 1980, our venerable colleague had the pleasure of seeing, in 1984, his daughter H.S.H. Princess Nora of Liechtenstein, now the Marquess of Mariño, take up the Olympic torch as she became the fourth woman to be co-opted into the IOC.

The IOC President, H.E. Juan Antonio Samaranch, and all the members of the IOC will keep alive the memory of H.S.H. Franz Josef II, Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, since it is from such figures as he that we can draw valuable inspiration in the pursuit of our goal.

*Raymond Gafer
IOC member
Administrateur Délégué*