

ROYALS

**Lovechild of Belgium's former King gives rare interview**

*Delphine Boël, the daughter of a Belgian aristocrat and King Albert II, reveals what it was like to battle for the truth as to who her birth father really was and the eventual scathing tone of his public statement of acceptance*

BY [ANNABEL SAMPSON](#)

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DELPHINE BOËL IN 1999

NICK CUNARD / SHUTTERSTOCK

In January this year, a DNA test ordered by a court established that King Albert II of the Belgians fathered a lovechild in the 1960s (when he was already married), a truth he had denied for decades. Albert, 85, who abdicated in 2013 partly due to the court battle over whether he would take a paternity test, finally – grudgingly – accepted that he was the [legal father of Boël](#), 51, the daughter of Baroness Sybille de Sely Longchamps.

This weekend, the [Sunday Times](#) conducted a rare interview with the artist, who in the early stages of her life had enjoyed a relationship with her father before he publicly rejected her wholesale. Here are five things *Tatler* learnt.

### **It was his official recognition – and the truth – that drove Boël to take her father to court**

Boël wanted the King to officially recognise her as his daughter. She told the paper that, ‘even if he had been a zookeeper or a criminal, I would have done exactly the same’. Albert’s long-awaited admission was the result of a bitter, years-long paternity battle, a cause for great emotional torment for Boël, whose blonde hair and blue eyes are familial traits of the Belgian Royal Family.



KING ALBERT II OF BELGIUM  
DEAN MOUHARTOPOULOS / WIREIMAGE VIA GETTY IMAGES

### **Vindication has changed her life – but not because she has any desire to wear a tiara or claim a cut of his fortune**

It’s true that she can now claim the title of princess and pop round for tea with her half-brother, King Philippe, 60, and Queen Mathilde, 47; but she claims to have always roamed around with the same people as them. ‘It’s not like I feel I’ve suddenly been elevated,’ she told the paper. She’s long been on friendly terms with the British royals, having attended some of the same English house parties as the Duke of Edinburgh with her Belgian aristocrat mother.

Equally, it’s not like she was after his fortune, since, as she explains, her mother’s former husband Jacques Boël, 91, a Belgian steel magnate, is ‘far wealthier than the Royal Family’. The *Times* says that Belgian reports put his family fortune at about £1.4 billion and Albert’s at close to half that.



PRINCE ALBERT OF BELGIUM (LATER KING ALBERT II OF BELGIUM) AND PRINCESS PAOLA OF BELGIUM (LATER QUEEN PAOLA OF BELGIUM) WITH THEIR THREE CHILDREN, PRINCESS ASTRID OF BELGIUM, PRINCE PHILIPPE OF BELGIUM AND PRINCE LAURENT OF BELGIUM, 1967

KEYSTONE / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

### **Delphine remembers Albert as a young girl – he was always available until he rejected her when he unexpectedly became King**

Boël's mother began a long affair with Albert, who was a prince at the time, and the younger brother of King Baudouin (and was already married to Paola Ruffo di Calabria, an Italian princess, with three children). Boël remembers Albert, who she nicknamed *Papillon* (or 'Butterfly'), being a visitor when she was young. Albert reportedly carried on being 'absolutely present' in her life for many years; she claims she could 'call him whenever I wanted'. Baudouin died after a heart attack in 1993 leaving no children – so Prince Albert stepped up to become king.

### **Boël couldn't comprehend why he rejected her**

When he first became King, he reportedly maintained relations, and Boël accepted that he couldn't acknowledge her in public, but he would often telephone, and sent 'little presents' on her birthday, Boël, who is now an artist, claims. She could not comprehend why he all of a sudden went cold. In 2001, she reportedly wrote to him to say that her mother was unwell but received no reply. Then when she eventually got through to him on the telephone, Boël told that *Times* that: 'He said in a really horrible way, "You're not my daughter."'

[Belgian ex-king's love child wins right to royal title](#)



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DELPHINE BOËL

RAT ROMUALD / GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

### **Boël would still like to meet Albert**

Admittedly, she's not holding out much hope of a joyful reunion anytime soon. The artist told the *Times*: 'I'm not a masochist'. She simply can't explain his denial, she says: 'If he had told me and there was a good reason for it, everything would have been settled.'

<https://www.tatler.com/article/delphine-boel-interview-sunday-times-lovechild-prince-albert-ii-of-belgium>

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