

The Fast Lane Society

Eton College, 18th March 2008

Chapter 5: Life's Cycles, Family

The agenda suggested to me for tonight was simply to draw on my experiences. Not as simple as it first sounds.

But the idea for the invitation was probably to draw on more didactic experiences.

It seems to me that the cycles that life creates for us and we create in life, are always full of such examples. The current cycle for me, which started as I mentioned with our return to our homeland, is encompassed in the greater cycle of Family.

My wife, Anne-Marie, is the youngest daughter of the late King Frederick of Denmark. We were married when she was eighteen and I was twenty-four.

We have five children, all of whom, I am proud to say, contribute to the work of our family's charities.

My first child, our daughter, Alexia taught in an inner-city school after graduating from university. I never saw her in action as she would not allow me to visit because none of the students nor their parents knew anything of her background. She has also taught children with Down's Syndrome in Spain.

Pavlos, our second and eldest son, studied at Georgetown in the United States, before attending Sandhurst and spending a few years in the British army. He now works in business and his fifth child will be born in July.

Then there is Nikolaos, our second son, who after he graduated from Brown University, did a spell in the British army. He then worked in TV News production in the US, came back to work in the City as well as being an invaluable asset at my private office.

And there are our youngest children, Theodora, who also graduated from Brown in the States and got her Masters degree in London in Classical Acting, and Philippos, who is graduating from Georgetown this forthcoming May.

In total we have eight, and soon to be nine, grandchildren.

Just before the birth of Pavlos, one of the most painful chapters in my life culminated, when the colonels staged a coup and my effort to overthrow them failed. The night of the coup, the months of secretly planning the counter-attack, the constant danger that my wife and children were in, the balancing act of leading a country in turmoil, of not knowing who to trust, can make titles for many speeches.

The ultimate lesson, after years of pondering every moment, every decision made, is to have a clear awareness of your set of values. And then stick to them no matter what.