

## A CONVERSATION WITH Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York

This lady only seems to attract poor publicity no matter what public spirited activities she undertakes. Yet, when I met her, she was utterly charming and it was an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity to talk with her.

Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, was then still a member of the Royal Family, before her divorce from Andrew.

I met her in Romania, in Bucharest Why was she in Bucharest? She had been in the north of the country starting her programme of support for Romanian orphans which I believe is continuing to this day.

Why was I in Bucharest? I was responsible for rolling out a franchised copying centre programme throughout Eastern Europe for Xerox, the Document Company. We were opening our brand new office in Bucharest, which had our own Document Centre which was the model for the franchises.

How was Sarah Ferguson connected to Xerox? Xerox provided a plane to take her to and from the orphans in the north and she would officially open our office and copying centre In return.

There was nearly a disaster when the plane she was travelling on was delayed by extremely bad weather and our opening ceremony was in danger of having to go ahead without her. Fortunately, she arrived only half an hour late. She apologised profusely and said she had been out in the rain most of the day but came straight to our function before going to her hotel as she didn't want to disappoint, despite looking rather bedraggled.

She charmed everybody and didn't seem worried that she only had three hours to wash, dress and recover before attending a function with us later on.

It was at this function that I was introduced to Fergie.

We had all been instructed, when being introduced, to shake her hand and say, "Good evening, Ma'am." And let her lead the conversation. I was talking to somebody else when there was a tap on my shoulder and I turned around to find her standing right in front of me. I was holding a glass of vodka in my right hand which I swiftly passed to my left hand and in my confusion I shook her hand and greeted her with, "Hello, how are you?" totally forgetting our prior instructions.

She didn't mind in the least, though our Romanian Country Manager looked a little concerned, as you can see from the photograph. We talked for at least five minutes which was more than everybody else. I assume it was because I was one of the few Englishmen there but she seemed genuinely interested in the work I was doing and the fact that my area covered the whole of Eastern Europe.

She was just wonderful, very beautiful and had a gorgeous smile. It was a real pleasure to meet her.