

The dating scene has its ups and downs the second time around

I used to be a little embarrassed to tell people that I met my husband online because there weren't as many success stories back then as there are today. However, it turned out to be love at first click of the computer key around five years ago when we first met, and today we're part of the growing list of online dating success stories.

I recall that on my husband's personal ad, his number one concern was that whoever responded have a love of dogs. Mine happened to be that I was searching for a man with hair. At 52 years old, newly divorced and thrown back into the world of seeking a significant other, life partner, or whatever trendy term was popular then, it was scary to be on the dating scene for the second time in my life.

I was blessed, however, to have had two women friends that were in exactly the same boat as I was in. We were like teenagers as we primped before each evening out on the town, only this time instead of the Beatles, we were listening to Harry Connick.

Before I ended up with my hubby, my friends and I made a gallant effort to search for Mr. Perfect. We visited all of Charlotte's sophisticated cafés, martini bars and outside arenas where the boating crowd hung out. Most of our adventures were ... well, unique is the word that quickly comes to mind. For instance, I remember sitting in some dive in South Carolina, excusing myself to visit the ladies room, and returning to find my best Bayonne, N.J. girlfriend conversing with a foreign fellow in Polish. All I could think of as I



*As I
See It*

Peg DeMarco

listened to them ramble on and on was that famous Humphrey Bogart line from Casablanca: "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world..."

My escapades varied as I tried to keep an open mind and always a sense of humor. Sure, I wanted to find a rich, suave and sophisticated man to share the rest of my life with, but it was beginning to look as though the Cary Grants of the world ceased to exist when Cary passed away.

My dates, not in any specific order, ranged from the former New York policeman who insisted on showing me how orderly his sock drawer was to the gentleman from South Carolina who decided that the infected toe he had been walking around with for months deserved my medical opinion.

There was the fellow of Irish descent that was tall, dark and handsome and a pleasure to be with until a joke of mine produced a round of laughter that would silence even the loneliest coyote (I decided after hearing that laugh that I'd better keep the conversation as sorrowful and serious as possible so that all the other diners could enjoy their meals in the crowded restaurant). It was a long evening, he trying to make light conversation and I with the voice of doom just so he wouldn't laugh again. (i.e., "I hear it's going to be sunny tomorrow," and my response, "Yes, but we're

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due for a hurricane.”)

Then there was the fellow who decided that he looked like Frasier Crane (he did not) who decided to cook me dinner at his condo. There was no physical attraction on my part, but I slapped myself silly with the lecture my mother always gave me: it's what's in the person's heart that's important, not what he or she looks like. She was right, of course, but she wasn't dating at 52 years old.

Anyway, back to my dinner story. I used to suffer from excruciating heartburn that I like to attribute to stress rather than the extra over-50 pounds we women tend to inherit. Frasier's meal consisted of spaghetti, a rich tomato sauce and hot sausage piled high on my plate. I asked for a glass of wine and he handed me a Margarita wine cooler. Although I don't recall the gentleman's name, till this day, I can still feel the heartburn that I suffered from after the meal and the long night ahead watching a rather dull movie with an extreme desire for an Alka Seltzer, Tums or anything to quiet the fire in my tummy.

Other tales come to mind during my two years on the dating scene such as the gent who refused to give me back my red satin gloves, the boat owner with a belt buckle so large you could spot him in a crowd, the short chap whose shoes I had to throw over the balcony railing of my apartment in order to get him to leave, the guy who fell asleep on my sofa after I had prepared a pretty good meal and snored so loudly my walls shook and the fellow who bent over and almost lost his hairpiece. It was after

that last episode that I decided to try the Internet and placed an ad using a 10-year-old Glamour Shots photo.

There weren't too many mate-matching Web sites five years ago, but today there are 18,400,000 sites for dating that I found on a Google search. Sites range from www.plenty-offish.com to www.rockabillydating.com. There are sites for speed dating (something new where a person gets to meet 10 to 20 people in one visit with the average visit lasting only a few minutes) to vegetarian singles to romance after 60. There are "how to" sites and, one of my all time favorites, "dating advice for geeks."

With all this information at our fingertips, I've been wondering why people are still having a hard time finding their soul mates. Frankly, I think even with all the technology in the world today, luck and timing have a lot to do with contributing to the success stories. Your priorities change as you age and someone that would have knocked your socks off at 25 probably produces a yawn when you consider him or her at age 40. And when you get to 50 ... well, perhaps having a good head of hair was superfluous on my part, but it helped narrow down my search when I responded to my husband's ad five years ago.

And today? My husband takes great comfort in knowing that he can do no wrong as long as he maintains a full head of hair.

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