

When Blind Dates Become Court Dates

By Reg P. Wydeven
April 8, 2006

Dating was unbelievably nerve-wracking for me. Even though my wife and I had been great friends since we received our First Communion together in second grade, her family moved next door to mine in seventh grade and I gave her a ride to school every day for three years in high school, I was still on the verge of cardiac arrest when we went on our first date in the summer after my first year of law school.

Not that she would have ever guessed. Because I'd had a crush on her for as long as I could remember, I would keep a paper bag in my back pocket in case I started hyperventilating. I needed that bag on the night we went to our first Packer game together. I was concentrating so hard on trying to act cool that I didn't pay very close attention to what street we parked on. I definitely did not come off as suave wandering around Ashwaubenon for 45 minutes looking for my car after the game.

I'm pretty sure she agreed to marry me just for entertainment value so she could see what moronic thing I would do next.

To help with the oftentimes awkward courtship process, some technically savvy folks have utilized computers in the dating game. For example, there are online dating services, such as Match.com and eCupid.com, that connect singles with compatible interests based on submitted applications. One dater, though, is suing the website eHarmony.com for refusing to allow him to participate in their matchmaking services.

John Claassen, of Emeryville, California, is seeking \$12,000 in damages for eHarmony's refusal to post his profile because he is technically still married. Claassen and his wife are officially separated, but their divorce will not be final for another two months. Therefore, because eHarmony has an unmarried-only policy, Claassen was not allowed to use their services.

Claassen's suit claims eHarmony discriminated against him based on his marital status. He feels other daters should have the choice of whether or not they want to date him although his divorce is pending.

eHarmony's policy is based on customer surveys reflecting their users requested their matches to be single. Other sites, however, like Match.com, have no such restriction.

Though Claassen is fighting to get on eHarmony.com, he's definitely hoping he never shows up on Don'tDateHimGirl.com. On this website women post photos and information about their former boyfriends who cheated on them. As opposed to Greatboyfriends.com, where women recommend that other women date their exes, women warn their single sisters to stay away from unfaithful beaus on Don'tDateHimGirl.com.

Men are given the opportunity to respond to any postings about them on the site, but only if they are aware such postings exist. Although it hasn't happened yet, many legal experts feel this website will be the genesis of a flurry of lawsuits filed by the men who appear on the site, suing their ex-girlfriends for defamation of character or invasion of privacy. Because women can post anonymously, the website will undoubtedly be dragged into these lawsuits to reveal the posters' personal information.

I just wish a computer could have told me that my wife was allergic to my cologne before I splashed on about a half of a bottle of it for one of our first dates.

This article originally appeared in the Appleton Post-Crescent newspaper and is reprinted with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. © 2005 McCarty Curry Wydeven Peeters & Haak, LLP. All rights reserved.