

Gorbachev and "glasnost" have made their mark on America and it appears it's stirring up new interest in touring the Soviet Union. But that interest hasn't quite hit in the metropolitan area. See Page 6D.

'Matchmaker, make me a match . . .'

Couples find love 'blindly'

By Chris Rizk
staff writer

Blind dates do work — whether to satisfy the urge not to be alone or to establish lifelong ties with someone — sometimes.

Just ask Sue Mason, a Westland resident.

She and husband Bob, 33, are together as the result of a blind date. And ironically, the person who arranged their first meeting was married after meeting her husband on a blind date.

According to psychologists, blind dates do work because the men and women who succeed at them are not "looking at the date as their last chance, their last dance," and the women are not "looking for their knight in shining armor."

ACCORDING TO Sue, 37, she was just looking for a "nice guy" to date, and the matchmaking was purely accidental.

"My co-worker talked to me about a friend of a friend who had asked her where you go to meet nice girls," Sue said. "She wanted me to tell her, so she could tell him. My answer was, along the lines of being considered chopped liver."

What began as a well-intended evening of wine and beef roast dinner almost ended in disaster.

Sue said "almost" because she and Bob managed to salvage their sense of humor and agree to see each other again.

Rather than meet at a restaurant, Sue invited Bob over for a home-cooked meal, but through unforeseen circumstances, they spent a large part of the evening at the home of a neighbor.

Sue's ex-husband made an appearance minutes before Bob arrived, but some fancy footwork prevented any unwanted confrontations, she said.

INSTEAD OF the wine and roast (it turned into the texture and color of a hockey puck in her oven while they waited 1½ hours for her car to leave), they spent the evening eating out — dutch-treat, Sue said.

When Bob left for home, Sue remembers telling him: "I'll probably never hear from you again."

"But throughout it all, he never lost his sense of humor. I think that really made an impression on me."

"I'd never met anyone who remained calm through such a nightmare."

Bob admitted to being a little stymied by the first date.

"It was definitely a funny situation," he said. "I hadn't had fun in months until I met Sue. Now we laugh all the time . . . or Sue laughs at me," he added, jokingly.

RACHEL ELMAN of Southfield



Kenny and Rachel Elman were the picture of happiness on their wedding day last month. The couple met each other with the help of her matchmaking friend.

liked her blind date.

In fact, she liked him so much that they married last month after dating for more than a year.

Once again, a matchmaker had a hand in Rachel's date.

A girlfriend who "likes to fix people up" set up the date, Rachel said.

She described her first "real date" with her husband as unusual.

"We were going to Windsor and got searched at the border," she said.

"It's the first time I've ever been searched."

"We got to the restaurant, and he, I and his CD (compact disc) player

had dinner together because he didn't want to leave it in the car."

Rachel, 24, attributes her successful involvement with Kenny to her enlightened approach to meeting guys.

"I JUST looked at him and said to myself, 'This guy has a lot of great qualities,'" she said. "I had always been attracted to guys who were not available, and here was one who was."

Debra Lare thinks her blind date "worked out well."

She was 16; Brad was 20.

After her first "big date" — a blind date — with Brad, Debra was convinced she'd never see him again.

"I told my mom that we wouldn't be seeing him again," she said. "We didn't like each other. He still doesn't know why he called me back."

Nine years and two children later, Debra said that what started as a "sour first experience" turned out to be a fantastic idea.

"I think blind dating is a great idea. What's wrong with mutual friends, who know what they're like, fixing two people up?"

Blind dates can be fun or a nightmare

By Chris Rizk
staff writer

You've heard all the stories and watched enough movies to know that blind dating is considered by some to be a ritual saved for the truly desperate.

Indeed, the idea of blind dating sends shivers down spines and puts forced smiles on the faces of those who've participated in "THE DATE."

But, according to psychologists, blind dating can be fun, rewarding and a great way to meet new people.

And it's not such a bad idea, said Ira Firestone, professor of psychology at Wayne State University.

"The mutual friend knows something about the person she's fixing up," he said. "A mutual friend is pretty much aware of what the person likes and wants."

"And that friend is not going to fix . . . blind dates are just added pressure, with rejection right at the forefront."

— George Kelly
psychologist

up that 5-foot, 11-inch woman with the 4-foot, 11-inch man."

Matchmaking is an age-old idea, common even in primitive cultures.

According to Bernette Miller-Shaw, a psychiatric social worker at Associates of Birmingham, the issue of blind dates is a "very important aspect" of society. Years ago, she said, people were always turning toward matchmakers to find a partner.

But what of the recipient of all that matchmaking attention who is inclined to reject the invitation?

MAYBE THEY aren't interested or they are just too nervous to make the effort. Or maybe they view it as an insult that they need to be "fixed up."

"People tend to be real anxious about blind dates and have a very narrow view about being introduced to someone new," Miller-Shaw said.

"I think people who are offended by someone saying that I have someone I want you to meet should examine why they have such an extremely fragile ego."

"If you're defensive about meeting people then you're really closing yourself off."

One way to lessen the severity of the first date is to meet in a public place, she said. Meet for drinks after work or go out for lunch, but whatever you do, especially if you're already hesitant about the ordeal,

don't give out your home phone number.

"Exchange business cards and don't meet at your home," Miller-Shaw said.

George Kelly, a Christian Family Services psychologist in Southfield, said that most people are trying desperately to connect with someone.

"I have this mental picture of people out there just groping (figuratively) for something," Kelly said.

"Dating is a cultural thing; blind dates are just added pressure, with rejection right at the forefront. Everything becomes so concentrated at that point."

Kelly doesn't reject the idea of blind dates, despite their bad reputation.

"Fundamentally, we're created for relationships," he said. "What we need to do is make a commitment to ourselves to socialize with our peers."

"IF WE GO into the date with the idea that it is merely to socialize and nothing more, then, eventually, finding a mate will happen. Granted, it's a kind of paradox, but it works."

But psychologists are quick to point out the necessity of not putting too much pressure on your date to fulfill your needs.

And it never hurts to sweeten the pot by putting forth your best behavior, said Patrick Kessel of Matchmaker International in Birmingham.

"We tell our clients that they can be themselves and still be wonderfully charming," Kessel said. "People have to remember that both sides are nervous and that's very normal and natural."

The important thing to remember during a blind date is that you don't have to make a great first impression. To expect that, Kessel said, is to set oneself up for enormous rejection.

"Just loosen up and have fun," Kessel advises his clients. "People have more fun when they're having fun."

Going into the date with the right attitude is the second key to success, he said.

"We stress very strongly that a successful blind date depends on them," Kessel said. "They have to want to, I mean absolutely want to, go on that date. After that, commu-

nication and feedback are essential."

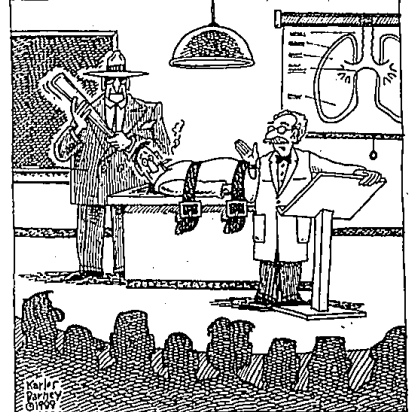
And don't prejudge your date, he warns.

Sometimes, under pressure, people act out of character and tend to over-emphasize even the slightest gesture.

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R.U.Syrus

Karlos Barney



"Gentlemen, you are here to witness a new treatment for heavy smokers — we bout the tar out of them."

Oh please, 'Lucy,' no more 'Fred's'

I'm ready to join the nearest convent and turn in my "I wanna meet a nice guy" badge.

The reason I say this is not because I don't want to find the right guy and settle down.

The reason I say this is because I'm hoping my best friend will turn in her "I wanna fix you up with a nice guy" badge after she reads this column.

Don't get me wrong. I love my friend. She's the best yenta I know. In fact, she makes Dolly (of 'Hello, Dolly') look like a matchmaking school dropout.

I admit I confess that every blind date she's arranged has been an adventure worthy of an "I Love Lucy" episode.

If you remember, Lucy was the one who always conned Ethel into going along for the ride. I (Ethel) always go along for the ride until it feels like I'm sitting on the Coney Island rollercoaster with Evel Knievel at the controls.



Carol Azizlian

ally off the wall," she warned me. "I don't know what he looks or acts like anymore because I haven't seen him in about 10 years."

That should have been a clue. I said to myself, "Self, maybe he's not cute, but at least he has a sense of humor."

When I met Lenny (not Bruce) — after his X-rated show in which he used various props commonly found in shops near Six Mile and Woodward (so I've heard) — we had a metaphysical discussion about the existence of God.

"God is an orange," he deadpanned.

THEN, there was the time we drove out to Hollywood together. We were following in the footsteps of our heroes, Lucy and Ethel. Except they took Ricky and Fred along and we didn't know any Rickys or Freds back then.

We rented an apartment in West Hollywood for about a month and hunted for jobs in Beverly Hills. She did makeovers at Umberto's, a posh beauty salon. I was so desperate that I almost considered riding around BH on a bicycle, delivering falafel sandwiches.

Since our cockroach-infested studio apartment was less than luxurious, we hunted for a new place to live — before our savings ran out. In the midst of our search, we met a

comedy writer who was moving out of his Santa Monica apartment into a Malibu beach house. (We were going to rent the Santa Monica apartment, not the beach house.)

This comedy writer, Ron, (not his real name) took us for a ride in his Volkswagen convertible to see his run-down apartment and his gorgeous house with an ocean view. Talk about the prince and the paupers.

Lucy sat in the front seat of the car with Ron. I (Ethel) sat in the back seat with his dog, a handsome golden retriever/Irish setter mix.

The next night, Ron asked Lucy out to dinner at Spago's, a chic Hollywood restaurant. I sat home with the cockroaches, sweating (it was nearly 100 degrees with no air conditioning) and trying to write a story I hoped to sell to a national magazine.

THE PHONE rang. "Have I got a guy for you?" "Oh no, now who?" "Well, he's a redhead and he's re-

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