

Looking for Love—Online

My wife of almost 49 years died a bit more than a year ago. I miss her very much, and I know I can never replace her. But I would like to love and be loved again, even if it can only be for the few years that I am likely to live. So, with some skepticism and trepidation, I have gone on internet dating sites. It's been quite an experience.

I began by asking Google for the best dating sites for old people like me—I'm 83. At the first site I went to, I don't remember the name, I was immediately "liked" by a 60-year-old physician who was amazingly attractive. Only problem: she lived in China, a little far for dating. Then I started hearing from women of all ages from Eastern Europe, some in their 20s, who clearly were hoping to escape to a relatively affluent life in the United States and probably hoped I would die soon after marrying them. Obviously, not for me.

I tried another site, one which let me get started at no cost. I quickly met a cardiac surgeon in Barcelona. Too far, of course, but closer than China. And she spoke with great compassion about my having lost my wife. So, what the hell, I started an online conversation with her. She was very sweet and good to talk with, but then a message flashed on screen that I would have to buy more units to continue the conversation. Hmm. I decided to check the site out more carefully and learned that some of the conversations could run to hundreds of dollars and might not be with real people. Should I believe that a cardiac surgeon in Spain who had emigrated from an Eastern European nation could speak English as correctly and sensitively as she did? I dropped off that site.

I signed up for E-Harmony, a well-known and reputable site. I later signed up for Match as well. Through these sites, I have met a number of women who are quite lovely. But the first two I connected with were in New Mexico and Illinois. Better than China and Spain, but it was not



likely that we would ever get together, even though I enjoyed ongoing conversations with both of them.

I tried to make it clear to the dating sites that I wanted to find a woman nearby, preferably in Baltimore, where I live. And I have met several who are lovely people. But I also continue to get “liked” by people from all over the US and Canada—some close enough if I still drove, which I don’t. Some are a train ride away—which may happen at some point. But some are from Florida, Texas, Oregon, just to mention three women who seemed particularly attractive. If only I had a private plane and/or unlimited time to travel.

I have had many lovely conversations with women via the dating sites, email, text, and telephone. Traveling to meet them is a problem for me in part because, as I said, I don’t drive and in part because I am very busy with music and photography and family and friends. Maybe someday.

But in the meantime, it finally struck me that virtually every woman who “liked” me said that she was very active—riding bikes or horses, hiking, and planning trips to exotic places or going to concerts, plays, museums and other cultural events. I got the impression that none of them ever wanted to just stay home for a quiet evening—although one said she did, occasionally. Of course, I don’t know if that’s true. Maybe they just think it makes them sound younger and more appealing. But for this old man it’s just the opposite. I’d like to connect with someone who would be happy that I spend my days and some of my evenings playing and photographing jazz and writing this blog. Maybe it’s because I’ve gotten old and don’t have the energy I used to, or maybe it’s who I really am and always have been. Most of my life, I was a borderline workaholic. I don’t know.

In any event, I decided to post on the one dating site where I could figure out how to make the following statement about myself:



“The women I have met on this site all seem to want very active, somewhat adventurous lives. Not me. I work pretty much full time at photography, jazz, and writing. I want a committed relationship that meshes with that lifestyle. No hiking or bike riding, but occasional travel and going out mostly to listen to or play jazz, hang out with family and friends, or occasionally to have a good meal. Staying home and cuddling sounds great to me. I’m 83 years old, and I’m pretty good for someone my age. But I don’t have the energy or drive I had when I was young; I’ve got the kind of health issues that are common in old age, and I no longer drive. Marriage? Not for me. Long term relationships? How long can they be at my age? I was married for 49 years. That’s not going to happen again. This is a hell of a way to introduce myself, I know, but I don’t want to waste your time or mine. If you’re looking for someone to have an adventurous life with, keep looking. If you’re looking for a warm, generous, honest man with active interests in the artistic, intellectual, and political worlds, I may be for you.”

So far one woman has responded positively to this. She said she wished she had been as candid. Maybe something will come of this, even though she lives at quite a distance. It will be interesting to see whether anyone else responds positively. It is really what I want. If no one is interested, so be it. I hope, of course, that that won’t be the case.

What do you think of opening with honesty?

