

Outright Radio
Series 2003
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Why Am I Still Married/Single?

From PRI, Public Radio International, it's Outright Radio, I'm David Gilmore. Today on ORR, Why am I Still Single, Why am I Still Married? Stories of gay folks who are perpetually single, yearning to hear those wedding bells, and what happens when finally they do...

At the top of the show, Louise Rafkin's story about lesbian marriage and the couple next door...

"Now that the New York Times is running announcements of gay partnerships in the wedding pages, the stakes have been raised. I wonder, will our relationships evolve to look more and more like those of our straight counterparts? I think it's going to look a lot like what I see out my back window."

Later on the story of Ann & Bonnie, a 35 year marriage that may be in question from a legal standpoint, but not from a devotional one...

"Do we have the right to require that they consider their motives and what is good/bad right/wrong? I don't know but we have to live our lives."

And finally, writer Tom Truss examines why he still, after all these years has not found Mr. Right...

"Well so far according to my friends and family the reasons why I am still single are: that I am either emotionally and geographically impaired, too picky, caught up in the exterior, and my favorite, you don't look right."

All true stories, and all on a theme of Why Am I still Married, Why Am I Still Single? We hope you'll join us for the next hour as we present the extraordinary stories from the heart of gay America.

Music

Recently, the **NOTION** of same-sex marriage has become so commonplace, though not legal anywhere in the US, except in Vermont where we can sort of get married – like we can sort of serve in the US armed forces, anyhow, it's becoming so commonplace that even the venerable NY Times was prompted to begin listing gay civil unions in the Sunday paper. Of course, you have to be a wealthy socialite to appear, but nonetheless, the gesture **did** signal a move toward legitimacy for same-sex coupledness, so I'm not complaining.

Of course, should gay folks be allowed to one day walk down the hallowed halls of the institution of marriage, then begs the next question: what would this marriage look like? Will gay folks reinvent the conventions of marriage or will the conventions of marriage re-invent the gay relationship?

Music

You know, Groucho Marx used to sum it up like this: "marriage is a wonderful institution, who'd wanna live in an institution?" It worked well for me as a gay man explaining why, at straight weddings, **I** was the only one there without a partner. Well, in our next piece, writer Louise Rafkin takes a stab at that very question of who'd want to live in an institution...as she looks back at her own early wedding **fantasies** and across the backyard at the **reality** of her lesbian neighbors...

Louise's piece:

You all know the joke: What does a lesbian bring on her second date? A U-Haul.

It's the archetypal script of girl-girl relationships: meet, merge, and marry. While our gay brethren are out there carousing and carrying on and crabwalking away from commitment, us girls, eight minutes after one makes a move,

the other moves in. Remember the saga of Ellen and Ann – Degeneres and Heche. They spied each other across a room at a party – and they suddenly “knew.” Ann was quoted saying something like “I’ve never felt this way before.” And Ellen was willing to risk everything for the swooning straight girl, because she, too, knew she had found the one. Heche’s reaction to her crush made me think for a second, she might actually be a lesbian – would a straight girl make such a drastic declaration? So why are lesbians are so quick off the mark to mate?

During that infamous prime time interview in their sprawling LA lovenest, my friends were lifting glasses and toasting their luck. I played the love scrooge. I sagely pronounced the union not long for the world, though when the break up became so public, I did feel sorry for Ellen. Still, she indulged her own insanity and put herself in the pinch.

Though most of my fella tribeswoman may be of the marrying genre, I seem to be of a subspecies. I believe in dating, for about five years. In fact, even if I’m living with someone -- which I am -- I say I’m dating. It’s not that I fear commitment per say, though some of my “dates” might disagree with that. It’s that as far as I can tell, you can’t really know what you’re getting into for say, the first five years or so. Hey if Oprah can be engaged for over a decade, I can say I’m dating for half of one.

I didn’t always think this way. When I was in high school, my home Ec teacher gave us the somewhat, in hindsight, creepy assignment to write up our own marriage. We had to even price it out. I developed my bargain basement nuptials alongside my boyfriend Tim. It was 1977 and I thought a beach wedding apt.: Tim would wear a Mexican wedding shirt and drawstring pants, and go barefoot. I’d wear something flowy -- a muslin renaissance-y thing, with macramé sandals. Of course, there would be flowers in my sun-streaked hair. The whole shebang, including lasagne and Matues, cost just over fifteen hundred dollars. I got an A on the project, and my teacher, Mrs. Pinched (and she was) wrote on the front of it “Save this for future reference.” What seems odd, now is not the bare feet or pot luck dessert table, hey I could still get behind that idea, but the notion that I ever believed enough in marriage that I would have thunk up one for myself.

Yet – here’s my admission – I love going to wedding. I love that there are huge numbers of people that are more optimistic, if not deluded, than I am. So when couple of my best pals fell in love and headed toward the altar... well, I refrained from making comment and merely watched as it all fell into place... Julie and Erika are musicians. They met and did somersaults for each other...and started making their wedding plans.

5:1:28 I never felt like I was really in love until I met Julie, after I was thirty.

The two of them come from really different backgrounds.... Erika has a bunch of straight siblings, all fairly traditional:

11:05 E everybody in my family is married, I was the only one in my family not married ///

And Julie, a twin, has a bunch of gay siblings... 13:45 J Nobody’s married in my family...

And suddenly something resembling a marriage ceremony service was floating in the air... .

JULIE 7:07 I never thought I’d ever would get married either, and I can take us right into who brought it up and that was Erika’s family. As I was meeting each of them and getting to know them, we all fell for each other, and I had never been brought into a family in such a way, someone who I was being sweethearts with. It was an amazing feeling to be swooped up in this family, and they started expressing interest in getting to know my family, which was an incredible feeling – not just my family, but my people. When are we going to meet her family, when are we going to meet her people?

They also said, when are you going to make it official?

Seduced by the charm of Erika’s family, the lovebirds starting making plans... they invited Erika’s brother to fly in for the weekend and help them create the mix...

8 By the end of the weekend, we had ourselves a really traditional wedding... (CUT THIE LOUD PART and he left and I freaked out,) and I really freaked out and I said this is not me, this is not authentic, and if we did ths in front of our loved ones it wouldn’t be touching to anybody and it’s not me, and I asked Erika, is it you? And she said no it’s not me, -- (ME) what did it look like? -- It was Mark’s paradigm – he got married and he’s straight... (ERIKA) the

aha moment is when he remembered the most touching moment at his wedding was when all of a sudden he saw his bride appear dressed in her wedding gown and that was so profoundly moving so he was like “well you’ve got to set it up so that one of you doesn’t see the other and then one of you appears ‘ - JULIE And I was like wait, this is supposed to be a party... that weekend gave us a real clear idea of what we didn’t want.

E 9:20 We got into some of our biggest fights ever as we were talking about the ceremony, but it made us have to dig in and say what are we promising to each other, what are we saying to each other...

The girls finally got it figured out, and the various sets of parents climbed, or crawled, on board. Julie’s parents took a little nudging. It was a delicate process...a lot of back and forth... one formerly close uncle and his family refused to attend, refused to accept the idea of gay marriage...In the end the celebration was a rousing success. People came from all over the country – and both gals wore dresses.... Dresses neither had seen before the ceremony.

20: People were clapping and shouting and hollaring and laughing and crying and there was an amazing parade of kids and kids playing trumpets and when we walked in the whole place erupted, not just when Erika and I walked in, but we had our posse of friends walk in with us and we all came in together and it was incredible...

JULIE 10: 05 I fell like we said to each other, I want to be as whole as I can be and basically I want to work in my life to achieve that, and I’m going to uphold you in doing the same, and I’m going to witness you while you’re doing that... and love you... and we are doing that now more than ever

Erika’s music – This is not a love song...

So here’s the thing, it’s now just a couple years later, and Erika and Julie are, well divorced. Divorce isn’t the word they’d use, and broken up doesn’t really work – because they both still live next door to me.

17: we still love each other in a very profound way and we’re still very much involved in each others lives, we’ve transitioned and we’re in a different place In many ways we’re in a much deeper... there aren’t any models...

What happened?

Julie: 23:1:05.. I don’t think we mate for life... I think there are other species that mate for life, but I don’t think that’s our nature...

I think the two of them are still figuring that out. But breaking up turned out to be a little complicated. Erika’s family didn’t really want to let their new sister – in – law go....

15: 45 we had to kinda go through another ritual, and that was this is painful and hard, but you have to let go of us as a couple and you have to walk through this with me and I’m glad you still love Julie, because I still love Julie, but we’re not together in the same way we were before.

From where I sit, across our shared backyard, it looks to me like Julie and Erika are as close – if not closer -- than they’ve ever been. And they’re certainly happier... it’s sticky at times, they both have had lovers or flings that have had to take a back seat to their relationship with each other.

I think there is something really interesting in the gay world, that is the phenomenon of ex-lovers. Ex lovers take on a really profound role in our live in the way it doesn’t in the straight world. (this follows the following quote, please transpose)

18:3:44 Once you’re gay you step outside the traditional paradigm that society sets up and then you step outside and by definition you’re not loving in the established way... then we all have passports towards being pioneers, ok what is it to having a relationship, there is so many multiple ways of loving and of being in relationship to each.. (Cut here?)

Now that the New York Times is running announcements of gay partnerships in the wedding pages, the stakes have been raised. I wonder, will our relationships evolve to look more and more like those of our straight counterparts? I, for one, hope not...Because, ever though I'm not one for marriage --- I'm all for commitment. (SONG Will you still love me tommrow – Erica....under and then up.)

21: (ME) HERE'S THE deal; I think we should get our twenty people and we should get everybody put in a 1000 dollars (or like five hundred dollars poss cut) and we should have a big fricking commitment ceremony. (J laughing) OK.. that's a great idea... (E) the question is, why would that be frightening to anyone, the idea of committing to twenty loved one, the idea of saying I'm in this until our teeth fall out, until we're old and grey and wrinkly... and what's that going to look like?
I think it's going to look a lot like what I see out my back window.

DG: Writer Louise Rafkin, author of *Other People's Dirt*. You can read more of Louise's work on the web at LouiseRafkin.com.

Intro to Ann & Bonnie

Our next piece addresses the *Why am I Still Married* portion of our theme. It's a fairy tale love story of boy meets girl. Boy gets girl. Then a plot twist: Boy becomes girl. Girl becomes lesbian. It's the story of Ann & Bonnie. On the surface they appear to be a garden variety lesbian couple - still together after 35 years. That's the surface story. In actuality, Ann is a transgendered woman – she was a he – and Bonnie is a straight woman now learning how to navigate a lesbian relationship – they were married in 1968 and since the sex change they remain one of the very few legally married lesbian couples in the US. The details of their relationship have outpaced the legal system's capacity to plan for this sort of occurrence. The legality of this marriage is in question – but as you'll hear later on, Ann has made inroads toward having it legally sanctioned under contract law in Arizona.

Here's their story...

I remember the day that she came to visit me from Ft. Huachuca. And I was shoveling out the horse corral. That was I was in my jeans and overalls. She was trying to talk about horses and I could tell she didn't know a whole lot about horses.

DG: That's Bonnie. You'll hear her referring to the man that she met in 1968 as she. But that was 31 years before his transition to become a woman.

AJ: 1:28 My name as a man was Ivan and I was a Lt. In the army and the image that was presented to her is not what you see now b/c our first date, I took her to the officer's club at Davis Monthan airforce base and took her to see Camelot.

DG: That's the voice of Ann. Ann now presents quite well as a woman. Other than her being considerably larger than Bonnie, she appears to be a middle-aged, conservatively dressed woman, with all the trappings of makeup, jewelry and styled hair. But her voice is going to sound male. So just bear with that fact, if you will...

It was kind of ...some people would say...a fairy tale first date. And I had been married before and decided that never again would I marry unless the woman met a very strict criteria. And I had a list of things that this woman had to meet and Bonnie met none of those qualifications. DG laughs. And I heard a little voice say this is the one. And of course I didn't even know who was talking. Excuse me? And again: This is the one. We started dating from there and I was just fascinated with this woman.

2:32 BJ: The person I knew was an officer and a gentleman. A very take charge person. I was kind of shy at the time and looked up to this person. This person was somebody I really admired.

Music

DG: Ivan and Bonnie were married within 6 weeks of meeting.

AJ: 3:23 Our wedding was at St. James' Methodist church here in Tucson. None of us at the time were practicing Christians in fact I was about as opposite to that as you could get. But we felt strongly about getting married in a church and were counseled by the pastor before it happened.

3:52 BJ: it was a very small wedding. Just family and close friends and I can remember there was a lot of tension. My dad didn't want me to get married and I wasn't planning on getting married. I was trying to get myself together and a half box of Kleenex was being used in the process. And ours was a very traditional marriage and I can look back on it today and still feel that even though this person has changed that I can still love and cherish those values are still true today as they were back then.

Our vows were of the more trad. type of love, honor, cherish until death do you part and as a non-christian at the time I didn't think much about that but after becoming a Christian and going through what the 2 of us have been through, I realized that the vows that we took were before god and the pastor said that "what god hath joined together let no man put asunder." And those words have come back to me many times since I've transitioned and we have a commitment not just to each other, but to the relationship we've established before god. And in spite of what the legal system and many fundamentalists people would say we both...

...refused to allow this to be set aside w/o god's permission and we've asked him about this and we've prayed that he would keep us in the right relationship before Him and we've truly relied on that and he has not given us permission in any way to set aside any of the vows that we took.

Music

DG: I want to ask you a little about the pre-cursor the time before you made your transition to becoming a woman which I imagine was over the course of some time. What was your thinking and then I want to ask bonnie what that was like for you?

AJ: She came down to visit me in my apartment on the base shortly after we met and she happened to see a negligee in the closet and at the time she just assumed that well, this person has been married before and has dated and I'm not going to ask whose this is. And in reality it was my own b/c I've know that I'm female as long as I can remember. At the age of 16 it became pretty apparent that to me the only way to survive was to conform to the image that I had no choice but to present and that was male. I had to learn how to be a man. But there was always the part of me that longed to be the female that I knew I was inside that expressed itself in cross dressing a little bit, wearing unisex underwear – this happened even when we were dating. She thought it was a little bit unusual but we all have our idiosyncrasies.

Music

BJ: Well, I thought the underwear looked rather sexy on her personally...but I really don't know if I was oblivious or saw what I wanted to see. It could be. I found it difficult cuz the crossdressing went on for some time and I went thru a gamut of emotions I'd get angry sometimes accusing her saying "you look ridiculous." And a couple times she tried to get into bed and I'd say, "I'm the only woman around here."

Music

DG: Well, over the years, Ivan continued to cross dress and turned to religion to help with this identity crisis...

:33 And I became a Christian and the aspect about having a part of me that I had to keep hidden and one morning as I was praying I just blurted out, "Father incase you haven't noticed, I'm here praying to you and I'm wearing a dress and I don't understand what is going on and why this is and I know it makes this difficult for Bonnie and I need to understand this." And we got a computer about that time and discovered the internet and the search engines and the first time I entered the words TRANSSEXUAL it was just a whole world opening up to me to discover that I'm not the only one in the world that feels like this. And I had asked the Lord for resolution to why am I doing this? What am I? And as I did more & more research it became apparent that I was indeed transsexual and I got angry with God

b/c “How can I serve you like THIS?” And then he began to show me that, “Well, excuse me. Why can’t you serve me like this?”

Music

I knew from then that staying married was highly unlikely – it’s an extremely small % of marriages that survive through this. We hadn’t any children so there weren’t any immediate family issues to deal with in regards to this. And I really didn’t see much hope of ever transitioning and like many transsexuals, suicide ideations became very strong and at one point I reached the conclusion that everyone would be better off if they didn’t have to deal with this or me and it would be better off if I wasn’t around. It was kind of well, “OK, that’s the resolution. How are you going to go about this?” And I wrote down on a piece of paper all the logical reasons that it would be better if I went ahead and took my own life. But the last thing I wrote on that piece of paper was, “Satan, you’ve won.”

Music

and I couldn’t get around that fact that I’d have to agree that Satan had won if I was going to do this. And that kept me from taking my life at that time. And I did a lot of praying and so I said, “Well Lord, I don’t know what can possibly happen but whatever level of femininity is according to your will I ask that you would teach me how to be content with that and I thank you.” And from that point forward things started happening so fast. The impossible happening. We had \$1k to spend toward transitioning. The money never ran out. Electrolysis can cost thousands and the money for treatment was there –

Music

I was before a superior court judge seeking a name and gender marker change and the gender marker change was granted after a reconsideration was filed b/c the judge had never had a case like this before his court. And on 3/28 after spending an afternoon on the phone with the state of Illinois regarding the change of birth certificate, he ordered a gender change and ordered the birth certificate changed. I couldn’t believe that I would ever be able to set foot in a church again and on 1/1 or the first Sunday in the year 2000, we were sitting in church having communion and me presenting as female and our prayer from the very time that we transitioned was that the lord keep us together in the right relationship with one another before Him. So separating has never been an option for us...if we truly are guided by the hand of the lord.

Music

DG: I notice that you said “we transitioned.” I wanted to ask you, Bonnie, how was it for you, watching all this happen?

We’ve been through some very hardships but we’re stronger and I think we’re better for it. It has brought us closer together. It’s cuz me to have to really question my values – things I’ve believe in before and it was very diff. It was necessary. While we lost some family and friends, I feel the ones we do have are special.

DG: Do you find that you miss having the Ivan, having the man in the relationship?

BJ: Yes. And there was much – I’ve learned that no one ever told me. And I came to the conclusion that I was going through grief – I’ve lost a husband. this feeling is real and needs to be validated. Once they were validated, I realized that I could go on from that point. The important thing is I married a person. It’s not just about gender. While this person has changed a lot, my joke is that I would certainly not look for someone this feminine – miss ultra-feminine. But the core values, the humor, compassion, the integrity that I admired is still there.

I realized that when I transitioned, Bonnie said she’d lost her husband. She had indeed cuz as Ann, I could not in public fill that room, nor in the bedroom nor in our life I couldn’t fill that stereotypical role of husband that our relationship would have to change if it was going to survive. Our marriage was always based on a best friendship. We never had children. So we’ve always been able to maintain that best friends type of relationship. I think that’s helped in our case. I am still her husband, her mate, but not her husband in the sense of the man to provide, take care

and protect her. And we just have to learn how to survive in this new rel. as 2 women who are committed to our well being and to our rel. and our ability to touch the lives of other people as a couple.

Music

DG: A couple they may be, but now that Ann has officially transitioned to being a woman, their marriage has been jeopardized...

:20 AJ: I asked at the Pima Co. courthouse what it would take to get the name only on our marriage license changed and she was aware that the name is now female and that I'm female and she said that we can't allow that w/o getting a court order from the superior court to change the name. I asked her why and she said, "well the state of AZ doesn't recognize same sex marriages and we don't want to set any precedents." And I am still the husband even though I'm female. And if a name change on the marriage license would be granted to a "normal" couple it would also be granted to me, AZ has a statute that they will not perform same-sex marriages in this state, nor will they recognize the validity of same sex marriages from any other state or any same sex marriage no matter how they came about. But by the same token, a marriage is a contract entered into by 2 people – a legal contract and according to contract law, a contract cannot be invalidated by subsequent circumstances and in talking to several lawyers in town, eventually this will be challenged in court and contract law will take precedence over the AZ statue that says our marriage is invalid.

Music

I asked Ann & Bonnie about their daily existence now – both the pain and the joy of living ostensibly as a lesbian couple and how that has affected them personally.

BJ: What's kind of interesting is that in this transition, I used to be shy and no sense of self-esteem and she was take charge and stand up for what's right – our roles have kinda somewhat, slightly reversed. She's more demure and I stands up for what's right. I think the lord has a sense of humor.

We go shopping for clothes together and we ask for one another's opinions on that. She'll tell me if my dress is caught on something. We have so many more things to share since we both see each other as another woman. And it's not just another woman. It's another woman. A woman that you care greatly about that you can share things about. Don't take this the wrong way, but laughing at some of the things that guys do and looking at one another and shaking our heads and thinking maybe that one will grow up eventually. [SKIP REST]

Music

AJ: The first time we were walking down the street and had an obscenity yelled at us as a lesbian couple, just tore me up inside to realize that I had put my wife in this situation. That if we hadn't transitioned, we wouldn't be going thru what we're going thru now. Where she works she has trepidation about what people in that conservative community would say if they knew the details of our relationship – of the fact that we are two women legally married. Would she be able to keep her job? I wish there was some way to not put her through this. The only way for that to happen would be for our relationship to not exist and if our rel. didn't exist, I'm not sure I would have made it through the depression, and our relationship though different...to be able to come out where she works in the rural community where we live is a very difficult thing. And it's OK for us to have to stretch our horizons and consider what is the reality of this world – what's good and bad. We've chosen to do that voluntarily but do we have the right to force that on people like in our church where we were asked to leave? Do we have the right to require that they consider their motives and what is good/bad right/wrong? I don't know but we have to live our lives.

BJ: :50 ...I have never felt like walking out on this relationship. It's the one thing I had peace about that. People want answers and I don't have answers. But more and more I'm convinced that as individuals that we do have impact on other people's lives. It's each of our responsibility to live up to what we feel is right.

AJ: We seemed an unlikely couple to stay married when we first got married. At 25 years we still seemed an unlikely couple to stay married. We were not stereotypical. We had no children and we're still married. I've thought a lot about this since I've transitioned b/c I've always accepted the fact that this marriage might very well end – we are

together b/c God knew what he was doing when he put us together. (background mumbles) The voice that I heard that said, "This is the one" even though she didn't meet any of the qualifications on my list, that was God speaking and he knew what he was doing when he put us together and if he hadn't chose this particular person to be my mate, we would not be together through this transition. And that god is the reason why our marriage is enduring. I am a lesbian. I recognize that. My wife is a heterosexual. Most people would see this as insurmountable obstacle. And I think that's why we're still married – b/c god put us together.

Close Ann & Bonnie:

DG: Ann & Bonnie in Tucson. Now, there is **quite** a brawl going on in Kansas, Texas and even the Supreme Court over how the courts determine one's sex and the implications therein. At the moment of this recording, Ann & Bonnie's marriage would be considered legitimate in Texas based simply on their chromosomes. You can read more about these battles regarding gender identification at www.Christielee.net. That's CHRISTIELEE.net.

Music begins.

Coming up: Tom Truss, on bent knee, finally pops the question... *"God am I ever going to have a lover, a longtime romance lover?"* The answer when Outright Radio continues from PRI Public Radio International.

Break

You're listening to Outright Radio, from PRI, Public Radio International, I'm David Gilmore. You can contact us at Comments@OutrightRadio.org or call us toll-free at 866-OUTRADIO. That's 866-688-7234.

Now back to our theme of Why am I Still Single, Why am I Still Married?...

Everyone knows someone great who's perennially single, you know that best friend of yours who never seems to get past a first date with anyone if they **get** a first date. For years writer Tom Truss has occupied that place in my life. He's handsome, he's smart, he's funny, and other than the fact that he leaves carrot ends behind my dresser every time he visits... and that he's been living in his car since I've known him, I can't believe no one has snatched him right up. But as you'll hear in this piece, his friends and family seem to know the answer...

Tom Truss' story:

It's funny how life works. I get an assignment, an e mail from David the producer of this show it says, (DAVID)"We're doing an episode on dating titled 'Why am I still single' I think it's perfect for you." He's right, it is, In fact it's something I've said a lot, "Why am I still single?", I'm 41! The last time I dated was 5 years ago ... well except there was that one personal ad I answered awhile back. I'd managed to live in San Francisco for over a year without a date. Gay Mecca right? No, just 'cause the pond is well stocked doesn't mean you're gonna' catch a thing. So I started searching the personals. It was depressing to say the least. Most ads are looking for just sex, which is fine, but not what I wanted. The others were 20 year olds seeking SASA's - "straight acting straight appearing" boy next door types. That's definitely not me, I'm out, over 40 and I live in an RV, which actually means I could arrange it to be your boy next door, but I don't think that's what they meant. Well after a few months of intermittent ad reading I ran across one that peaked my interest. So I called his out going message, I liked his voice, he said, "I'm an acupuncturist, a nature boy into rock and roll and Judaism." All good signs. I left him a message and my number, he called me and got my voice mail, then I called him and got his voice mail, for about 2 weeks our voice mails were having a great relationship then we got lucky and had a real live conversation. He was funny, interesting and there was definitely a spark, it was now time to meet.

Music

We agreed on a restaurant that neither of us had been to; wise choice, equal footing. He rode up on his bike, another good sign, and the second he took off his helmet I knew I wasn't interested. Ahhh yes, looks. That all important ingredient. What do they say about food, 90% of it is presentation. A friend of mine says, (Amie)"Tom when are you going to have the insides be more important than the outside. Look at the whole package for a change." I know, I know that makes sense to me, we all grow old and looks change and what has to last is love. But there also has to be that initial spark to set the love flame burning. Which wasn't there with this guy. Anyway we had a fine date, but frankly I had enough friends

and so did he. We parted with the unvoiced knowledge that neither of us were gonna go out of our way to make our paths cross again. So that was my last dating experience, 2 weeks of phone play, an hour and a half of grilled vegetables, and the mutual feeling of non attraction.

That date was almost four years ago, and it's what turned me off of blind dates, at least until this summer. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Music

So I e mail David back saying, "Yes, I 'm interested in doing something for the 'Why am I still single show'", and he says, "Why don't you make the angle on your piece be live. Go on a date and record it. Do voice overs and editorial comments after the fact, like, 'Listen to me, did you hear that, no wonder I don't get any dates, listen to how stupid I sound!" or 'Listen to how picky I am,' Which by the way is why my sister thinks I am still single. (Tori) "Tommy, you're just like my friend Marianne, too picky . Ya' know when she relaxed a little bit she found a great guy!" Maybe she's right, the last and actually only person I've ever really dated was Christopher, that was 5 years ago in Seattle. He's a sweet man, artist, country boy, elementary school teacher. We met on his birthday. He had just moved to Seattle, and I had just decided to leave Seattle. We dated for 6 months till I left. Some friends believed we connected because my fear of intimacy and commitment weren't challenged. The pop-psycho babble sounded something like this, (Favero) "Tom you knew you were leaving in 6 months. So it was safe for you to try the water, you could get your feet wet but ya' didn't have to dive in whole hog." Some people think I'm still single because I'm scared of commitment. Maybe they're right. I've been on tour or transient since 1989. Almost 15 years of on the move with no deep roots anywhere just a few temporary homes dotted on either coast. With all this traveling and homelessness, it's been hard to get a date, which makes some friends say (Jean)"I think you've constructed all that just so you won't have to be in one place and deal with all that comes up." Maybe she's right.

music

So David and I agree on my assignment, go on a date and record it. With permission of course. I loved the idea, it seemed like fun, and then the problem hit . How am I going to record a date, when I can't even get one. It's not like their beating down my door here in San Francisco, of course some friends say that is precisely why I am still single, (Christopher) "Tom, stop waiting for someone to come to you, take a risk, go after them!" He's right, my history is one of non-pursual, I don't ask people out. I wait for them to ask me out. Maybe I'm nervous, embarrassed, or just have a classic case of low self esteem. Either way this show was looking bleak, because I was about to head off to rural western MA for the summer. Not exactly the hotbed of Homosexuals.

music

Well so far according to my friends and family the reasons why I am still single are: that I am either emotionally and geographically impaired, too picky, afraid of commitment and intimacy, caught up in the exterior, and my favorite, you don't look right. That one came from my Mother (Susie) "Ya' know Tommy if you cut your hair, you'd meet more men." I did, it didn't happen.

music

One month after getting this assignment form David I was living on a farm in western Massachusetts, teaching in the woods and entertaining the possibility of living here for good when a co worker says, (JIM) "There's this guy I think you should meet, you'd like him, he's great" He lists all kinds of qualities and attributes that appeal to me. Other friends whenever I mention this guy all agree and usually say (JANE) "He's very sexy!"

When I heard this I had two thoughts at the same time, "Oh my God, I'm going on a date", and "Maybe I can do this radio show after all." Then my second thought was, I wonder if he'll agree to being recorded while out on our first date? That question inspired an internal monologue that went something like this, "Tom if you want a long term relationship - which is what you really want - then why begin it this way, with an interview performance art radio piece thing. How gross. It'll destroy any chance of a sweet authentic space and turn it into some kind of fakey talk show. Don't do it, it's not a healthy way to start a relationship ?. Woah start a relationship. Wait a minute, have I started something" At that point I hadn't

even met the man and yet our relationship had already begun. Unbeknownst to this friend of a friend, who in my mind was quickly turning into a possible paramour. I was starting our relationship with him in absentia.

Music

Our first meeting was not really a true date, I think a true date is when one of you chooses a place to go out and it's just the two of you like dinner and a film or a walk. What we were about to have was a group thing, it was a bunch of folks coming over to his farm for a work day and then a picnic. Driving there I was completely nervous, I got lost, I ran a stop sign, basically I was back in high school. I had all kinds of fantasies, the most memorable being that I returned in a couple of months with my friend Matt, and the two of them ended up falling in love. Uch!!

(music) My palms were actually sweaty, and I was short of breath. I felt like Gidget on her first date, But when I got out of the car a profound change took place I was no longer an over wound up action toy, but felt like that great moment when a blanket has been perfectly tossed in the air to spread over a bed. A warm calm descended, I could smell the earth. I looked around and I realized I could live here forever. I was stunned by that, and then gently eased into a fantasy of us sitting on his porch in a storm years from now, drinking tea, and ... but fortunately reality enteredTom remember you haven't even met him yet, and you're already moving in. Another reason why some friends say I'm still single, "You tend to move too fast, it's like you're in your own world. or something" I guess they're right. I grew up watching Lassie, Flipper, The Wonderful World of Disney, and was in musicals throughout high school, I tend to stray from reality.

Music

So here I am after five years of wandering the desert of no dates standing at the gate of an oasis and it turns out the man I'm supposed to meet is inside having a deep conversation with a friend. It was perfect really, I wasn't quite ready to enter the oasis, so I stayed outside, and joined some folks picking raspberries. We wandered about looking at the grounds, and checked out the views, and after half an hour of unconscious stalling on my part my friend Jean said, (AC) "Enough, you're acting like a junior high kid, stop avoiding this, and go inside!"

Music

As it turns out this blind date of a man is all those things that my friends have said and more.

I could do the list, but I don't want to. I imagine you've noticed that I haven't even included this persons name or any overtly identifying characteristics, that's because I don't want him to be known. Not that he's closeted, or that we're scared, but because we, this thing, the us is new, it's tender, it's undefined and I want it to remain unspoiled.

So I'll call him George Bush. George Bush and I have seen each other maybe five times. The first three times were with other people, and the other 2 times were real dates! I like George, and I like how I am with him. We're playful. We danced in a field, teased each other saw some shows and had a fancy dinner out. It's been great, and it's been hell.

I've had to come face to face with the reasons why I don't date. It's not the "I'm too picky" or scared of commitment stuff, or that I travel too much, it's much more basic than that, I'm still single because it hurts to love.

Music

In one of my lonelier moments back in San Francisco I had a talk with God. It happened two years ago and is another reason why I am still single. It was while I was falling asleep in a friend's spare bedroom this conversation with God was one to remember, it went exactly like this. "God am I ever going to have a lover, a longtime romance lover?" And a very quiet, kind of scary humble feeling came over me, it was like looking at the grand canyon. And a voice or feeling said, "Are you sure you want to know, because you're going to get the truth this time." I could tell it was real, I took a deep breath and checked in to see if I could handle it, and I was ready, so I said yes. Then a soft direct voice answered my question, "Yes, not now, but in a while, and it will be amazing!"

Music

Since then I haven't needed to date, I haven't longed for a partner. That's been more than two years. But then along comes this man in western Massachusetts and nothing is the same.

It seems now that I have opened my heart just a little bit to experience some love and to let in some light, the darkness has come as well. He doesn't call, I freak out, he does call I freak out. I think about him at the weirdest times, while teaching, or swimming, should I buy him this, maybe we could do that, and accompanying them are the what if's They plague me. I think is this the road to love, is this romance. I don't how to do it. I'm not prepared for this.

After four weeks of my heart and brain wrestling for the truth, in the end, I'm left confused. I like to think that falling into love could be a freeing and powerful thing. My image is of a rope swing over a river. Swoosh, let go into love. My reality, however, is that it's hard for me to let go. I don't want to love someone only to end up having to say good bye to them. Knowing that I might stay together in love forever or I might lose it at any moment some find that exhilarating. But not me. To live with the constant knowledge that separation is inevitable, for me is too daunting. I think THAT's why I'm still single. I don't want the pain and sorrow that accompany love when it is lost, so I just don't allow love to happen.

Music

Yet, it's funny how life works. Even though my habit is to guard my, there were three very clear moments recently when my armor was penetrated. In one we were goofing around trying to tap dancing on a gravel path, another he launched into singing scat while I was playing the ukulele, and the third was while he was teaching me how to milk a cow. There he was on a stool, hands under his cow milking away saying first you gotta blah blah blah then you gotta blah blah blah, while I was standing there gaga not hearing a word thinking "I could fall in love with this man."

The reactive part of me looks at these moments and says "Look out! Don't get on this ride called love - it's dangerous." But the intrinsically human side of me shouts get on the ride, get on the ride! So far the ride has been short and wild, and I'm scared to continue. I don't know the so called "rules of love." But my friend Loris says (Bart) "Tom the only thing you need to know about riding a roller coaster is when to get off." Well, we'll see what happens.

Music

A little update for you...at the time of this recording, life has intervened in this budding romance, and Tom Truss says that he and his friend are just that: Friends.

Music

That's all for today's show.

ORR is produced in collaboration with KXCI in Tucson, Arizona. Our Senior editor is Jesse Rose DeRooy. Our business manager is John Brennan, marketing director Sheila Gerzoff, and our production assistant is Sandy Mauck.

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This is David Gilmore - thanks for joining us.

PRI Logo.