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On Love

## Matchmaker Ann Wood still works the old-fashioned way

By Kathleen Horn

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Ann Wood still sits down face-to-face with her lonely hearts, drawing out their romantic histories, their passions and their hopes for a mate. And when the Georgetown matchmaker fully understands her clients, she chooses their dates. There's nothing digital about it, no e-mail evaluations or compatibility algorithms. She uses intuition, just as she has for the past 24 years.

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In the early '80s, Wood fell into matchmaking. A woman who ran a dating business in New York was looking to expand into Washington. She asked Wood to interview District clients, which wasn't a stretch for the veteran journalist who had spent 24 years in the Washington newspaper industry. Wood found she liked chatting with clients without the pressure of having to write a story when she got back to the office.

Wood launched her own matchmaking service in 1986. Since then, she has honed her method, which today consists of a one-page questionnaire followed by an in-person, hour-long interview in an office adorned with pictures of couples gazing lovingly at each other. If Wood thinks she can help, she



Ann Wood (Courtesy Of Ann Wood - Courtesy Of Ann Wood)

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charges \$1,000 for a year of her services. How many dates that entails depends on the person and circumstances.

"People say it's hard to meet people here," she says, noting that many of the social opportunities she grew up with no longer exist in the same way. Married women don't hold dinner parties to set up their single friends anymore, Wood says. And when Wood was dating, in the 1950s and '60s, girls waited for Prince Charming to come along, she recalls. Women were expected to get married; they took jobs to meet men and stayed at home unless they had escorts. Wood remembers girls refusing to do anything on Saturdays because they had to sit by the phone, waiting for potential dates for that night to call. Men have lost a lot of power, she says.

Wood is impressed with the independent nature of most women today. "In the professional world, they know how to interact with people," Wood, says. "And if things don't click with a guy, you just move on."

Wood doesn't show clients photos of their matches before a date because personality doesn't often come across through pictures, she says. She pairs clients based on how they spend their free time, and from there she likes them to draw their own conclusions. "It's like seating a dinner party," Wood says. "You hope people will find each other congenial, but I don't expect them to fall madly in love."

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Wood recommends that her couples do activities on the weekend, steering clear of anything that just includes sitting down at tables. That means just having dinner or coffee is a no-no because it seem like a stressful job interview, she says. She discourages meet-ups after work, because those end up being "another chore on the schedule." She also tells men to steer clear of uttering meaningless phrases like "I'll call you."

Ultimately, her matches are "about [clients] being happy with each other, not necessarily marriage," she says, though she says she's responsible for at least 50 weddings.

Wood wed once, in 1958. She met her husband, Charles Taber, while working on Capitol Hill. He was handsome, charming and a great tennis player, Wood says. But the marriage lasted only a few years; in 1961, the two amicably divorced, she says. That didn't sour Wood -- in fact, it had the opposite effect. No matter what's thrown at you, she says, "don't sit and wait for life to come to you."

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