

Female Companionship 1972-1979

When Sylvia and I separated in 1972, I was dejected, depressed, despondent, downcast, discouraged, disheartened, distraught. (I can't think of any more words describing my condition beginning with the letter D.) My friend Dan Jordan, who had been in a similar situation, assured me that I will eventually feel better, and that I will even find someone. He guaranteed that there were lots of women out there who I will find attractive, and who will find me attractive. I won't be alone for long. I wasn't so sure. I was 44, had been married for over 20 years, had three children, and at this point in my life, had a low opinion of myself. Besides, I had no idea how to go about meeting women. I certainly wasn't going to pick up someone at a bar.

What follows is a brief factual summary of the "female companionship" that evolved in the years from the time of my separation until my marriage to Fran. This is an important part of my life, and it is part of my story.

The way I went about looking for someone was the way I went about looking for a job: I asked friends and colleagues if they knew of any eligible women. Seven years before, when my job at AFSCME was ending, I asked friends and colleagues if they knew of any available jobs. It worked then, so I figured it would work now.

Within a few months, I had gotten some good leads. On my own, I met a lovely young woman at a friend's wedding. We were an item for a few months, but she lived in the suburbs. Some time later, through my involvement with the Jewish Community Relations Council, I met another lovely young woman, slightly older than the first, but several years younger than me. She was an observant Jew, divorced, and had two small children. It required a bit of juggling, but we had some great times together. She also lived in the suburbs. Seems Dan was right. That is, about feeling better and finding someone. He said nothing about the suburbs.

I also developed a friendly relationship with a few women, as a result of my position as a regional director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Part of my job required attendance at meetings of State Advisory Committees. Our members were drawn from wonderful, committed people across the state. Meetings were frequently held in the evening, requiring me to stay overnight in a hotel in the city in which the meeting was being held. After the meetings, a few of us would go out for a drink. I would occasionally return to my hotel in the company of one of the women members. I always looked forward to attending those meetings.

A close relationship developed with a young woman who was a consultant to the Commission. She worked as a part-time field representative with two of our State Advisory Committees. From time to time, we attended meetings together. Over time, we became more than friends. I visited her on several weekends, and she stayed with me when she attended Commission meetings in Washington. It was getting serious. She was also divorced with two children. We both enjoyed letter writing and initiated a passionate correspondence. After a great deal of planning, we arranged to spend a week together in Puerto Rico. We met at the airport, flew to San Juan, and looked forward with great anticipation to the week ahead. We rented a car and had made reservations at a beachfront hotel. It was all very romantic. At first. Toward the end of the week, we found ourselves bickering, and having disagreements about nonsense: where to go, what road to take. We shared the driving, and it appeared that neither of us had confidence in

the other. The details are vague, but by the week's end, we were hardly speaking to each other. I have heard that this is the sort of thing that often destroys relationships. It did this one.

One of the people whom I asked about "eligible women" was a Commission colleague of mine. He was dating the very attractive ex-wife of a prominent sportscaster. He told me that she had a friend who was a knock-out. We met. I agreed that she was a knock-out, and we started dating. She was divorced, had two children who were living with her ex-husband, and she had an apartment in downtown Washington, just a few blocks from me. A perfect arrangement. We saw a lot of each other. She met my children and my friends. I met her children and her friends. The relationship continued for quite a long time. We were a couple. We invited people to dinner as a couple, and we went away on vacation as a couple. Perhaps I had learned. When we traveled, there were no serious disagreements that I remember. Though we clearly came from different backgrounds and had different values, she did everything she could to share my values and interests. It was clear to me that she would have liked us to have a permanent relationship. I did not. When the Commission opened a New England Regional Office, I applied for the position of Director, in large part to end the relationship by moving to Boston. And so it came to pass in 1979, that I left Washington, and started a new life. I said good-bye to everyone, including my friend, but she did not see this as the end. She insisted on visiting me, and persuaded me to stay with her when I returned to Washington for meetings. I was easily persuaded.

By the fall of 1979, I had met Fran. I was living at 371 Beacon Street and she was living at 520 Beacon Street, just a few blocks from me. Another perfect arrangement. We developed a close relationship. We truly shared the same values and interests. However, I learned that you can have several casual relationships, but you can not have two close relationships. (A friend, who was aware of my two relationships, compared it to the Alec Guinness movie, "Captain's Paradise.") It clearly became untenable, when, after a period of time, Fran, the closer relationship, became pregnant. And so it came to pass as winter ended in 1981, I told my friend in Washington that our relationship is over, for real.

My nine years as a bachelor came to an end, and I couldn't have been happier.

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