

COURT & SPARK

The Luck of the Drawer

Lois Barth was raised in Elmont, NY, and as an adult embarked on several intriguing careers ... stand-up comic and massage therapist among them. Eventually she became a life coach specializing in "singles in search of singles." But even coaches can't win the game of love without some help from the sidelines.



Nancy Hajeski

That's where her mother's best friend comes in – while in the chair of her dentist, Charlie Pollack, she decided the man in white was perfect for

Lois and so gave him Lois's phone number. For one thing, she thought Lois would be charmed by Charlie's background: He was born in Transylvania, Romania – Dracula's castle was close by, he points out – but was raised in Israel. Although his family moved to the Bronx when he was 14, he still retained the trace of a European accent.

Unfortunately, Charlie ended up tossing the paper into a drawer with all the other dating recommendations from friends, family and patients. "I didn't do blind dates," Charlie explains. "I was post-divorce, single and looking, but I had never called a woman I didn't know."

Six months after receiving Lois's number, he decided it was time to shake up and wake up his life. "Because," he says, "you have to do something you've never done before, if you want things to change." So he took all the eligible women's phone numbers from the drawer, read all the descriptions and chose three. "I liked Lois's best," he says. "She was a comedienne – and I needed a laugh." He called her during the day, hoping for the phone machine, but she picked up. He stumbled through

an introduction, and then said, "How do we do this?"

Once Lois figured out who he was (she'd been wondering why "the delicious dentist" had never phoned), she said simply, "It's called a date." They met at the Time Cafe on the Upper West Side. "I kept staring at his patterned tie," Lois recalls, "and finally said, 'Are they molars?'"

Charlie grinned and said, "Yes, but you didn't notice the dental floss!" Lois was amused and then disarmed when he nervously asked to see her again. "He actually blushed when he took my hand," she says. "I agreed to go out with him again, but I wasn't exactly bowled over." Charlie was so different from the intense, brooding, artist types she normally dated, Lois admits. But then, two months later, something shifted in a big way. "I'd invited him to hear me sing at an ecumenical service. I turned around and saw him, our eyes met – and we both reeled back."

After three years as a couple, they decided they wanted a weekend home. "We both agreed on upstate NY," Lois explains, "and to us that meant Woodstock or New Paltz."

But the lure of Sullivan County was not to be underestimated. Charlie knew the area from waiting tables at Brown's and later attending the Raleigh and Kutsher's for folk dancing. Lois had done stand-up comedy at singles weekends at the Concord. So they drove to Jeffersonville, where they picked up a pennysaver and checked out the properties.

Ironically, the page they opened to featured the house they ended up buying – a hundred-year-old farmhouse surrounded by meadows in White Sulphur Springs. "We looked at more than two dozen houses after that," Lois recalls, "but we never found anything we liked better."

A year ago, they closed on the property



COMEDIENNE Lois Barth and dentist Charlie Pollack owe their relationship to their willingness to take a chance. C. POLLACK PHOTO

and now divide their time between New York City and the Catskills. In addition to furnishing and decorating the house with Charlie, Lois is currently working on a book based on her one-woman show, "1001 Dates from Hell and the Woman Who Lived Through Them." Her passion is supporting clients in finding a life partnership, and she's convinced that goal is possible for anyone who truly wants it.

"One thing I was surprised to discover with Charlie," Lois confides, "is that a relationship can be easy. It's work, but it shouldn't be a struggle." She smiles at him. "The trick is to learn to look for what we need, not what we want."

And how does it feel to be sharing their lives in this new homeownership venture? "I can be hyper," Charlie says. "Lois calms

me down."

"We're both dreamers," she adds, "He'll jump in ... and I make sure we land."

Charlie is also quick to remind Lois that one of the three phone numbers he chose on that fateful day was for a Russian fashion model. "But I never called her," he sighs, with a mischievous glance at Lois. Chances are, he never will.

Nancy Hajeski of Roscoe is a freelance graphic designer/editor and, under the pen name of Nancy Butler, is an author of award-winning romance novels. Her column, Court & Spark, about couples and how they met, appears regularly in The Towne Crier. To suggest a couple who has a story to tell, e-mail Court & Spark at fetchcat@aol.com or call The Towne Crier, 845-439-8020.