

# *Internet Dating after 60!*

*Is love only for the young?  
Is 60ish too late for the young-at-heart?  
Is it dangerous? Are perverts hiding behind the  
photos?*

*How many frogs must you kiss before you find your prince or princess?*



The mystique and misunderstanding in some quarters about internet dating is that it is only for the young when in fact it is also for the young at heart. Is it dangerous? Are perverts hiding behind well worded profiles and fake pictures waiting to take advantage of unsuspecting lonely individuals? Are good guys and gals to be found on such a public platform? The answer to all these questions is a resounding YES! It takes a discerning person to traverse the intricacies of internet dating and be successful and safe.

Dating services provide all manner of cautions for new members including suggestions on when and where to meet potential companions and when and what information should or should not be shared. It is common knowledge naivety online can be very dangerous. That said here are a few of my personal observations on the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Recently a homeless man made headlines using a laptop computer to fleece women on one dating service. He claimed to be a record mogul and persuaded them to invest over \$1,000,000 in a bogus business venture. Closer to home, one gentleman reported to an acquaintance of mine that the first four people he met online were not who they said they were. Three were married women out to cheat on their husbands and one was a man pretending to be a woman. Though not surprising, it is disheartening and these are, I am certain, only the tip of the iceberg.

From what I could tell, most of the people on this particular service were lonely divorcées. Today's skyrocketing number of divorces leave a plethora of broken hearts in their wake and for the newly lonely who are used to being in relationship, meeting good men or women to fill that void is a chancy thing. Internet dating is one option.

Many of my women and couple "friends" disappeared when I divorced – obviously they weren't true friends to begin with. I cut my losses and went out and made new friends, good friends who were not threatened by my single status, and after seven years without so much as having coffee with a member of the opposite sex, I agreed to give on online dating a try. This wasn't my idea, it was only with the fierce encouragement of my niece, who said that after seven solitary years it was time I had some fun (as though a woman could only have fun with a date). She was enjoying online dating and so should I. A nice

thought, but trust me; I didn't think it was fun. It challenged all my vulnerabilities and flaws in my self esteem and have heard it did so for many others. It is definitely not for the faint of heart. I struggled with many issues. Did I look good enough? Was my personality adequate? Was I courageous enough to try again? Did I really have to kiss some stranger? And was this person really who he said he was or some pervert preying on lonely women? Would I want to remarry after the mess from which I had finally been extricated? I said to myself, "Self, who needs all that in her 60's? I have several friends that are quite content with their single life in their senior years. I have a full life and am not lacking anything other than male companionship so why get on this roller coaster?" Oh my, my head was swimming and my heart was racing "No, no, no, being alone is better than this potential heart attack." Hindsight now tells me God had something different in mind for me.

My niece was relentless and at last I signed up for online dating. My experience, looking back, was that among the lonely divorcees there were a lot of gigolo's looking for an easy woman to warm their bed. Several of them are still on the service six years later and who knows how long they had been on before we first chatted. One man was so anxious to meet me he threatened to take my picture to my church and find out who I was because I refused to tell him. Originally I had a profile but no picture online even though the dating service encourages pictures to spark more interest. Thankfully, it recommends members use nicknames and protected email addresses when communicating to avoid awkward situations. I would never have been comfortable meeting this man in person after all of his posturing and insisting. Another gentleman only wrote or called me when he had several drinks in him. Although we chatted through email for some time, I did not follow-through with meeting him either. I met others at restaurants for the obligatory first meeting. They seemed nice enough but I was not interested and it went no further.

Eventually I met a nice man, Mr. Wrong, who was definitely not a match, but I did go out with him. In fact, he was the only one I actually agreed to date. This was amazing because from his profile I was confident he was Mr. Wrong should I become interested in a long term relationship. Before we met he was working in the corporate world and traveling a great deal. As a result, when he returned to Houston in between these long trips he had no social life. He spent his spare time doing and seeing things alone that he wished he could share with someone. His secretary convinced him that online dating would ease that problem and set him up on a dating service. He worked diligently on his profile and was quite proud of it. To my relief he did not have the word sensuous in it as so many others did. I had already blocked everyone with that word and those with facial hair so my choices were getting less and less each time I went online. He met several nice ladies before me. I, however, didn't like his picture or his billing himself as a Renaissance man. (It seemed to me that he was boasting that he was impressively good at a lot of stuff. He says he didn't mean that he was good at a lot of stuff, just that he was interested in a lot of things). Regardless, the phrase turned me off rather than on. He was a retired Army colonel with many honors, an ethical and brilliant man with an easy going disposition and very much the gentleman. But he didn't match my "list" so I was a tough sell. And I was still anxious about his character since there seemed to be many questionable people on the service. My attorney son was not comfortable with any of this and, without my

knowledge, checked him out thoroughly on the internet to make sure he was who he said he was. One can't be too careful with these online relationships (particularly when they have the credentials he professed to have), but he checked out just fine. He gave him a clean slate and me permission to date him. "Well, I never!!" I thought with a smile.

We were not a match; we were anything but a match. I had contacted him. I saw his profile when browsing one day and was interested in his writing. When I saw his comments that he was writing three books, I sent him an email asking about his writing. Disappointed I did not ask to know more about him, he said, "Don't you want to know anything about me?" Careful not to hurt his feelings, I answered back somewhat nonchalantly, "Oh, okay, sure." We exchanged many introductory emails. That was all I really wanted, someone to chat with. I was only interested in a little male companionship to go dancing or an occasional dinner date at most; If I had to have a man in my life I wanted a widower with no ex-wife hanging around to make my life miserable. I am a serious Catholic and he was "spiritual but not religious." Mr. Wrong had an ex-wife and (I found out later) a challenging one at that. I wasn't yet emotionally ready to actually date. However, Mr. Wrong was determined, not like the first man, but in a gentle yet persistent manner. It didn't take long for him to convince me to give him a chance.

Our first "date" turned out to be roughly 12 hours long. He brought me flowers and was very non-threatening. We went for a picnic on the public beach, then to a nice restaurant and changed into dressy clothes in the restrooms. After a delightfully romantic dinner we danced and laughed until late in the night. We chatted comfortably and it was a pleasant evening. After deciding we enjoyed each other's company, his blue eyes twinkled as he smiled and said, "Would you go out with me again, Peggy? Tomorrow?" I was caught off guard and boldly said, "You're such a nice man. I've really enjoyed our date, but I've had enough worrying about other women to last a lifetime, so I really don't want to date anyone that is dating other women and that's too much to ask of you so soon." He quickly and graciously replied, "I'll be delighted to date you exclusively while we get to know each other. I like a challenge." Dating him brought me happiness I had not experienced in many years but because of his faith and ex-wife he was still Mr. Wrong, and for the next six months he remained Mr. Wrong even though we dated often and I liked him more and more.

I had been praying that if it was God's will for me to ever have another man in my life, that God would pick him for me, my preference being a silver haired man who played the piano and sang. My friends continued to remind me of that prayer I had shared with them. The fact that Mr. Wrong had silver hair, played the piano and sang did not alleviate my concern, but I gave him a point for that. I did not like facial hair and he was clean shaven. Okay, another point for him. He was a gentleman and a gentle man with a healthy sense of humor. Another point for him. He was not profane. Several points for that. Then there was this whole picture and Renaissance man thing. I didn't like his picture but he was attractive in person. Let's call that a draw. I was only open to a widower because I didn't want to deal with an ex-wife. He had an ex-wife and he seemed to still be connected to her more than I deemed healthy or necessary. Oops, take away a point or two. He needed to be a man of faith. He was "spiritual but not religious" and that was almost a

show stopper. For many months I nervously teased, “you are my “heathen” friend.”. Take away a couple of more points – is he in the hole now??? All these attributes I had identified as important to me. Most important was that I needed to feel secure that he would be faithful and trustworthy and that could go either way. It would require a leap of faith on my part and a great deal of time. This man who was so “iffy,” did I really believe God had sent him to me? Trust me, God and I did much talking about him. You see, I liked his accomplishments, his brilliance, his easy going and gentle ways, his silver hair and blue eyes and sense of humor; but I was afraid to trust my heart to him. He was divorced after all, so he wasn’t perfect, there had to be something he had contributed to that situation. I am sure the bad experiences of my first marriage were at the bottom of all my resistance. I was petrified that if I compromised I would get the same wrong results as before.

Things went along nicely the first few weeks. Then one night at the beach while watching for shooting stars, he reached over without any forewarning and gently kissed me. It was great and even though I did not let him know it at the time, it was a turning point for me.

It was clear to all my friends that Mr. Wrong fit much of the description of what I preferred in a man. I said to myself “this CAN’T possibly be God’s choice because Mr. Wrong doesn’t share my faith, he doesn’t go to church and there is the ex-wife problem.” I continued to pray that if he did not belong in my life God would close the doors and remove me from this relationship. Well, God knew his heart and I did not.

What I didn’t know at the time, but found out later, was that early in our courtship, my Mr. Wrong had also come to newly recognize several things that were important to him. Faith had not been a big thing in his life prior to me, but as we got to know each other, he said the fact that my religion gave me such a great deal of support, identified in him a hunger for things that feed a person’s soul as well. Surprisingly, the fact I was a sincere and constant church attendee drew him to me. He was impressed that not only did I attend church, I truly believed in God and my religion’s tenets and tried to live them in my daily life. He said he enjoyed being with an intelligent woman with whom he could talk and who was generous and kind and cared about people, beginning with those in the immediate family. He thought I was an extremely “good” person and his biased perception was and is that I am beautiful inside and out. My physical attributes appealed to him and when combined with my life outlook, they made him realize that I was the person with whom he wanted to share the rest of his life. “Lucky me!! And he wasn’t a pervert after all!! Maybe just the right blend of bad boy to be fun, but definitely not a pervert.

We dated for a year and it was a time filled with beautiful experiences including many trips to the beach. We were alone on “our” beach when he proposed. He had put down a blanket on the sand and the wind was howling. I was lying on my tummy on the blanket trying to keep it from blowing away. The awkwardness of the moment created a serious case of the giggles in me. The stars were bright and the waves were crashing on the beach. There was a chill in the air so he gave me another blanket to throw over myself, but holding on to it was almost like parasailing. While I laughed and struggled with the blankets, he fiddled with something in the back of the car. Finally he asked me if I could

settle down and be still for a moment. He had two silver goblets of champagne in his hands. (Even though I am normally a non-drinker, we often had champagne at the beach). I sat up and as he handed me a silver goblet he kneeled and said... "Don't know about your future, don't care about your past, don't want to be your first love, just want to be your last...Peggy... will you marry me?" It took my breath away. Of course I did not say yes immediately, I told him I would have to think about it. We had talked about the possibility of marriage one day and I had given it much thought already.

I had many years of singleness to review my hopes and dreams and wants and needs and was well aware of what was important to me and where I had gone wrong the first time. Had Bob not been able to respect my faith and attend church and pray with me, I could not have moved further in the relationship. To make it even more challenging for him, I needed it to be manifested in his lifestyle.

I am not your everyday Catholic. Trained in spiritual direction, I have a serious relationship with Jesus and have been very active in my church for over 30 years. God had very clearly been an active participant in my life and had taken very good care of me through all the good and also catastrophic times; I didn't need a man to be okay. My closeness to Jesus made it painful to even think of living with a non-believer. I explained to my husband prior to his proposal how important my relationship with God was and it was imperative he respect that. In return, I would never ask him to become a Catholic. It took some time to work all this out between us but his love for me impelled him to be my companion in my faith and that made me love him even more. With this I began to see why God had chosen this strong but gentle giant of a man for me.

I thought about his proposal for all of maybe one minute more and then threw my arms around his neck and said "Yes!" I was so beside myself he had to remind me to be careful with the goblet and to drink the champagne. In the bottom of the goblet was the most beautiful diamond ring I have every seen. It was perfect, the proposal, the ring, the beach, him, everything.

I asked him later if he had written the poem he used for the proposal. He said he had found it in his Dad's papers after his Dad died at age 49. Bob had held on to it all these years. A few years prior to this, Bob's Mother had passed his Dad's wedding band down to Bob as eldest son. In anticipation of our wedding, I had small yellow gold bands added to the outer edges of his Dad's white gold wedding ring and gave it to Bob (former Mr. Wrong) as his wedding band. He thought that was the most perfect ring he could have received and was very happy also. I never met his Dad but he will always be close to our hearts.

Six weeks after he proposed, we were married beside the pool at a friends' house in a civil ceremony with out closest family and friends.

Bob said he didn't believe I would really say the vows and kept expecting me to run off. Partially joking, I told him I only said them because we got married in a civil ceremony and as a Catholic, the church did not recognize the marriage and I could give it a try without too

many permanent repercussions. That kept him on his toes. But isn't God great!!! Mr. Wrong turned out to be the man of my heart instead of my list and a perfect mesh with me if not a match. One year later, on the same day as our civil ceremony, we were married in the church. He says he has made some good and bad choices in his relatively long life, but that there is no question that asking me to marry him was the best decision he has ever made, even if he did have to work long and hard to win my heart and my hand. Isn't that sweet! I am a true romantic and so is Bob. It is a great mesh.

Since our marriage writing has become one of the ties that bind. We birthed our first "baby", my cookbook *Down Home Delicious Spice up your life with incredible Gulf Coast cooking in December 2007*, and are marketing it through our new publishing company Stonywood Publications. Oh, yes, more babies are on the way, Bob is still writing his three books and hopefully they will be published (birthed) in 2009. I have some other smaller efforts in mind also so we have a full load. My book has given me an opportunity to do many radio interviews which are like vitamins to my soul, another plus in our union. Together we are the proud parents of a combined 8 children and 11 (soon to be 13) grandchildren. Who would have guessed that internet dating could lead me into such a variety of joyful endeavors with such a marvelous husband.

This is not the end; it is only the beginning and what a fun time it is! We don't have time for rocking chairs or Alzheimer's; there is still too much living to be done. So be of good cheer out there, stand your ground as I did, without compromising your hopes and dreams. You may also find as I have, that life is not over until it's over and there is much living to be done and happiness to be had. I don't know what the future holds for you but I only had to kiss one sweet frog to find my prince and live happily ever after.

*by Peggy Touchtone Sholly*

Peggy, a Houston, Texas area resident, is a speaker and the award winning author of the coveted national **2008 Mom's Choice GOLD Award** (that recognizes authors and others for their efforts in creating quality family-friendly media, products and services) for her cookbook *Down Home Delicious, Spice up your life with incredible Gulf Coast cooking*. *Down Home Delicious* (Stonywood Publications ISBN 978-0-9796652-0-2).

Peggy is available for television and radio interviews and inspirational speeches on bringing *Down Home Delicious* meals, laughter and love into marriage and family or chatting about love online after 60. To schedule author Peggy Touchtone Sholly for a radio, TV, or print interview, contact Peggy directly at [psholly@sbcglobal.net](mailto:psholly@sbcglobal.net), phone 281-996-9120 or leave a message at 1-800-335-1280. Additional information on Peggy and her book can be found on Peggy's website [www.downhomedelicious](http://www.downhomedelicious).

Peggy is a seasoned public speaker and has been a guest on radio shows throughout the United States including California, Minneapolis, New York, New Jersey, Houston, Dallas, Canada, Florida and Baton Rouge. Peggy's book was featured on KSTP TV in Minneapolis, and she has done book signings throughout Houston, Texas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana at Borders Books, Barnes and Noble Books, and Walden Books. She will do a cooking demo class at Central Market in Houston in late fall. Her cookbook will be featured on Giftnary.com for several months later this year. She participated in a Publicity Summit earlier this year in New York and is scheduled for other media events in the coming months.