

My Blind Date

I have had only one blind date in my life --- so far anyhow. It was about this time of year, around Valentine's Day in 1967. I had completed my residency in Chicago and was back at the Cleveland Clinic doing a fellowship year in cardio-thoracic anesthesiology. I was living in a small, furnished apartment near University Circle. One evening I received a phone call from a young man who introduced himself and said he was interested in studying podiatry in Sweden. He wanted to talk to someone who could tell him a bit about what to expect. Could he take me to dinner some time and discuss living and studying in Sweden? He had gotten my name and phone number by contacting the Swedish Consul, who had referred him to someone in the Vasa organization who knew I had studied in Sweden a few years earlier. The name of the referring party was vaguely familiar to me, but this person actually didn't know me, nor did he know anything at all about the young man who had called him. So unlike a blind date arranged by mutual friends, this was a **really** blind date!

The following Saturday evening I buzzed the caller into my building and answered his knock at the door. There stood my blind date, craning his neck and looking up at me. "Oh my God," he said. "I should have known you'd be tall!" He was about a head shorter than I, but pleasant looking and well dressed. For the life of me, I can no longer remember his name. "The Guy" asked if, now having met him, I still wanted to go out to dinner, and I thought well, why not, so long as he was willing also. I had been out a number of times with shorter friends, but apparently he had never dated someone taller. We drove to a nice restaurant in Shaker Heights and enjoyed a leisurely dinner, throughout which we talked about my experiences in Sweden and what he hoped to accomplish while he was there. Arranging the time off would be no problem for him because he was in group practice with family members. After lingering over dessert and coffee, and getting on quite well with each other, the guy suggested we drive on downtown to "The Flats," the trendy new nightclub area in Cleveland, for after dinner drinks and more conversation. We both thoroughly enjoyed the evening, and he asked if he could see me again.

The guy showed up for our second date wearing a hat, and asked if I didn't think it made him look somewhat taller. He offered me his arm but seemed self-conscious about the height difference between us as we walked from car to restaurant and later from restaurant to movie theatre. I found it awkward to carry on a conversation with the hat, preferring to talk to the face, so asked him to please remove it, which he did. He seemed far more comfortable when we were seated and more on an equal level with each other. Again we wound up another nice evening at a bar in "The Flats."

In the car as he drove me home, the guy told me he'd like to go dancing on our next date, but first he had to find himself some elevated shoes and make himself three or four inches taller. I groaned. I have two left feet and here he was, planning to dance on stilts! We'd be a comedy act in the making! We obviously needed to talk some more about this, so he again parked the car --- on railroad tracks in the warehouse district, as it turned out. The friendly cop who tapped on the window and asked us to move on even

helpfully pointed out a more suitable spot for us “kids” to “make out,” which he incorrectly assumed we were doing. But we did move the car down the lane a bit and sure enough, soon watched several trains pass directly across the spot where we had been parked. We continued our long discussion about the height issue, which the guy just couldn’t seem to get over. Finally we both concluded that there was no point in continuing our relationship, fun as it had been so far. He took me home, we wished each other well, and parted regrettably but amiably.

Alas, what might have been.....

- JC / 12 February 2005