

Log on for love

The internet has transformed the world into a global village, making it possible to meet friends in other continents, and find your perfect partner, as Sally O'Shaughnessy discovered



CYBERSPACE might seem an unlikely place to meet your partner, but these days it's not uncommon. By placing a personal ad on the world wide web you might just find yourself dating someone from another corner of the globe.

For 55-year-old Chris Beglin, a divorcee from Devon, and 41-year-old divorced mother of two Bonnie Fetter from Pennsylvania, in America, meeting online was a dream come true. Through the internet they carried out an old-fashioned courtship, resulting in marriage six months later. Chris and Bonnie told *Cable Guide* the story of their cyber-romance ...

chris@devon.co.uk:

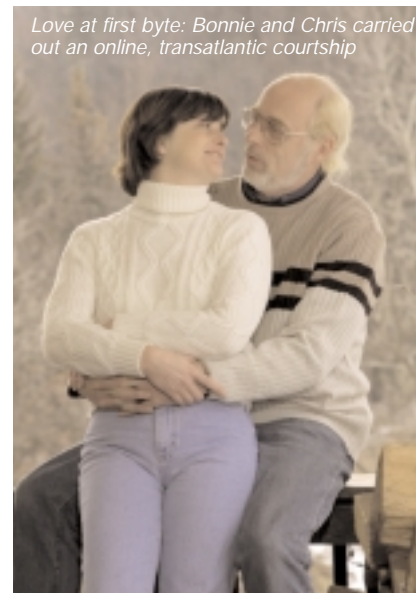
'At the end of 1999 I put a little profile onto some lonely hearts websites almost for the hell of it. In essence my profile said "Engineer, 55, 6ft, recently rather badly hurt looking for a serious relationship". About two weeks later Bonnie sent back a very brief note saying "Hi, I'm Bonnie, would you like to write to me?" That was it. Just this sweet little email from Bonnie in Bedford. I wrote back after just two or three days and said a bit more about myself and that was the kick-off.

'Bonnie had had a very rough time and had quite a lot to talk about. We were

very open with each other and after a few weeks of considerable email exchange, the relationship developed its own momentum. I didn't know what she looked like. That fact that she'd said she was 5ft four and weighed 140lbs was academic. I felt that I was very much drawn to this person. By the end of February, I wanted to meet her.

'By coincidence, my son Julian works 30 miles to the north of her. Because he was nearby he contacted Bonnie and met her before I did. I flew over in March, stayed with Julian, and Bonnie came over the day after I'd arrived. Without any exaggeration, it was like

Love at first byte: Bonnie and Chris carried out an online, transatlantic courtship



meeting an old friend; we'd covered so much ground that seeing each other face to face was the icing on the cake.

'When I was driving back home to Devon from the airport I had this feeling of a considerable wrench. There was something that felt as if it wanted to be home. We continued corresponding at an ever-increasing depth and in late April we decided we wanted to marry.

'Bonnie was more wary than I was and started sending personality analysis to me. I would send her the results and she would reply saying 'this is weird' because we were on a par. We got married in June, because we both felt the need for commitment. We went into the courthouse, got our license and then went to the chapel. The ceremony itself was only about a quarter of an hour - that was it. In September I moved to America and I can honestly say every day there is a special moment - I consider myself blessed.'

bonnie@pennsylvania.net:

'Before I met Chris I was a divorced mom. I had seen Chris's lonely hearts ad on the web and I told him to write to me and he did. Then we just got to writing back and forth... we wrote a lot. I kept sending him these personality tests to see if we were compatible.

'I'd thought a lot about what I was looking for in a partner. What I wanted was a nice, steady man with some kindness in his heart. Chris just seemed real. In a strange way we had an old-fashioned courtship.

'You can be really honest when you're writing. You don't have the awkwardness of going on a date. The first time we met was at his son Julian's house. It was bit of a shock, him just coming over here to see me. But he seemed truthful. We talked about having a good foundation, as far as our values were concerned.

'I know it's a stereotype, but I think that men in England are taught differently about these things. Chris is a gentleman. He's really romantic and sentimental. And he doesn't like football - I like that! He likes to potter round the house. He's responsible and we just have fun.

'The wedding was a JP wedding. Seeing as we met over the internet, I decided to find a chapel over the internet. I found one in Winchester, Virginia. It was, shall we say, overly decorated ... a bit tacky! But it was a very nice day.

'I was getting totally hopeless about ever meeting anyone that I felt was acceptable. I was kind of scared about using the internet, but you get to the point where you just have to learn to trust people again. You can usually tell who's real and who isn't.

'Now I have what I want. I've got it all.'



Happy ending: Six months after meeting online Chris and Bonnie got married

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