



At the bar, alcohol makes it easier, not better

Looking for love in all the wrong places

By Tom Mainelli
Senior Editor

Their eyes meet across a smoky room — but only for an instant. They both look away, a little shy but interested.

Two hours later, with four more beers in his system, he makes his move. They engage in a little small talk, some awkward silence, then the exchange of numbers.

Ah, romance.

People are still hitting the bar scene in hopes of finding a mate — but spectators agree, the chances of finding true love are slim to none.

"I know very few people who have met in a bar and gone on to have a lasting relationship," said Jason Ronell, a bartender at Iguanas, 1426 O St.

Often people with little in common hit it off at the bar. When the partying is over, little is left to talk about, he said.

"About 90 percent don't even have a chance," said Ronell, a UNL senior recreation and leisure major.

Mary McGinn-Dewey, a bartender at O'Rourke's Tavern, 1329 O St., agreed.

"Just because you have a good time drinking together doesn't mean you could have a good relationship together."

In fact, just the opposite will probably happen, she said.

"If you go out looking for 'Mr. Right,' you'll find 'Mr. Wrong.'"

Ironically McGinn-Dewey met her husband, Brad, at the bar. He was a frequent patron, and several friends at the bar introduced the two.

"It can work," she said. "But I'm practical — I don't rush blindly into relationships."

Rushing blindly often means falling into the eternal bar scene stereotype — the one-night stand.

"One-night stands happen all the time," McGinn-Dewey said. "I would be surprised if at least one person (a bar patron) didn't go home with somebody else every night of the week."

These one-night stands continue to occur despite the threat of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

John Willnow, manager at E-Z Street, 1033 O St., said he didn't think people were taking these problems seriously.

"I don't think people are as scared as they should be," he said. "It has cooled down

some, but there are still a lot more one-night stands than there should be. People are still out looking for sexual partners at the bars."

Alcohol creates an environment where one-night stands are more likely, he said.

"Liquor is a good icebreaker," he said.

"Things happen when you are drinking — people open up and talk to people they normally wouldn't."

But people shouldn't blame the alcohol for their actions, Willnow said.

"Just because you're more open, it doesn't mean it has to be sexual," he said.

Last call is often when the people interested in one-night stands make their move, said Barb Burke, a bartender at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

"Last call is a really popular time for people to try and hook up with somebody," she said.

McGinn-Dewey said that many pickups occurred after O'Rourke's famous last call.

"People are always hanging around outside the door, asking 'Where's the party?'"

"That is where the trouble starts," she said.

Some people seem to think they can make something out of a one-night stand, McGinn-Dewey said.

It isn't very likely.

"Ninety-nine point nine percent of one-night stands don't amount to anything," she said. "A lot of the time the guy won't even call the girl again because she was 'too easy.'"

Reynold "Reg" McMeen, owner of Duffy's Tavern, said the type of bar often determines the types of interactions that occur among its patrons.

"We're not really a singles bar," he said. "If people get together here, it is usually after they have gotten to know each other. After a

while they become friends and maybe start seeing each other.

"We have a tavern atmosphere, which is something different from the dance club scene."

Willnow said E-Z Street considered itself a singles club.

"We are a dance club, and it is a singles atmosphere," he said. "People do come here to meet other people."

That doesn't mean people should expect to find a relationship by frequenting the bar, he said.

"Most serious relationships don't develop after meeting someone in a bar," he said.

Michael Stock, a frequent customer at Duffy's, said most bars ended up acting as a singles club at some point.

"Every liquor establishment turns into one on the weekend," said Stock, a graduate student in film and English. "It can get pretty ugly, even in here (at Duffy's)."

"The bar is generally the safe zone, but the farther you get from the bar, the more 'interviewing' you'll encounter."

Part of the problem with that whole scene, Willnow said, is that you could end up talking to a lot of people you don't like before you find

one whom you do like.

Willnow said singles had to be lucky to meet the right person in bars.

Willnow must be lucky.

He met his girlfriend in a bar, and he credited their relationship to luck, as well as similar goals.

"We've both been around the block a few times, and we knew what we were looking for."

But where should people who don't know what they are looking for look for it? Stock said that is the big question.

"The bars in Lincoln are really the social center," he said. "There are not enough other things to do."

Willnow agreed.

"People my age, in their 20s, are social either through their work or the bars," he said. "Where else are you going to meet people — church?"

That's where Ronell's mother advised him to look.

"She said to go to church if you want to find a good wife."

McGinn-Dewey offered her own advice. "If people are going to look, they should do it at work or in class," she said.

"But the best advice is just not to look. If you are looking, it won't happen — so just stop looking."



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