



Tell us what you have... **discovered!** In Silicon Valley, about yourself, along your travels. Finish this sentence and send it to discover@mercurynews.com. **"Recently, I discovered..."**

... that three words can change my life. At Denny's, the waitress said to another waitress, "Get over yourself." The words uplifted my spirits. Just like the words my son gave me the week before he died at the age of 25:
"Mom! Lighten up."

Patricia Boyle
Soquel

... to not force happiness. If you try, it'll be fake. Happiness is unintentional. It only comes when it's real. I was once with a group of people who were popular. I continued telling myself I was happy, but in truth I wasn't until I went back to my real friends.

Annemarie Guido
San Jose

We will showcase our favorites in print and online. To be considered, entries must not exceed 50 words, and include your full name and city.

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things to do today

Our ideas, Page 2



PATRICK TEHAN — MERCURY NEWS

Julia Ma, a matchmaker who specializes in the Bay Area's Asian-American community, talks with a client in her San Jose office.

Honest matchmaking

Silicon Valley ethnic communities turn to old-fashioned services offered by plain-speaking women to find a partner for life — love optional

By Bruce Newman
Mercury News

Not that you would lie. Not you. But some people — other people — apparently view Internet dating as an opportunity for reinvention, an act of self-improvement without any actual, you know, improvement. Countless profiles on sites such as Match.com, eHarmony — not to mention the rougher trade lurking on Craigslist — feature heights, ages and six-figure incomes that exist only in the digitally datable database.

After her marriage fell apart and she moved to Silicon Valley from Canada a decade ago, Julia Ma signed up for a number of dating services, including several Chinese-language sites. "Canadian people are very nice; they don't lie," Ma says. "But on Match.com I met so many liars! One guy even was in jail for six months. I finally sent a private investigator to check him out." (Match.com did not respond to a request for comment.)

She was paired off with so many losers that Ma started her own matchmaking service, San Jose-based Your Asian Connection, offering a more personalized — and carefully vetted — approach to fixing up the lovelorn of Santa Clara County's largest ethnic community.

Among Silicon Valley's immigrant communities, the sort of hands-on matchmaking that traditionally was engineered by dotting aunties and pushy parents is once again available from professional romance wranglers. Like Yente, the matchmaker in the Broadway musical "Fiddler on the Roof," they will find you a find,

See **MATCHMAKERS**, Page 6



JOSIE LEPE — MERCURY NEWS

Jasbina Ahluwalia's Palo Alto-based Intersections Matchmaking serves the Indian community.

Exhibit explores link between 'Peanuts,' Beethoven

By Richard Scheinin
Mercury News

OK, so there's this "Peanuts" strip where Schroeder, one of Charlie Brown's best friends, is getting ready for something big. He's doing push-ups and sit-ups. He's jumping rope and jogging and, finally, he wolfs down a big bowl of cereal — carbo-loading, 1950s-style — before leaping onto the bench of his toy piano where, with beads of sweat flying from his brow, he begins to play an unnamed musical composition.

The opening notes of the piece are right there in the strip. But what is it? Cartoonist Charles M. Schulz never identifies the music. And why all the sweaty preparation?

Because Schroeder, explains William Meredith, director of the Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies at San Jose



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State University, is tackling Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, a piece so daunting that "some people consider it the most difficult piano sonata ever written," he says.

But don't worry if you don't read music and haven't heard the "Hammerklavier." An exhibit opening Saturday at the Beethoven Center explains everything. Titled "Schulz's Beethoven, Schroeder's Muse," it explores the connections between "Peanuts" and Beethoven,

starting with many of the 300 or so cartoons that Schulz — a Beethoven obsessive, just like little Schroeder, his alter ego — drew about the composer between 1950 and 2000.

Amid the 17,897 "Peanuts" strips drawn by Schulz before his death nine years ago, Beethoven — his life, his loves and, most of all, the wonders of his music — is a running subtext. Now it has been decoded, thanks to the exhibit, co-sponsored by the Cen-

ter for Beethoven Studies and the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa, where Schulz resided for years (and where "Schulz's Beethoven" first opened last summer).

If you visit the exhibit in downtown San Jose, you will see Schulz's original drawing of the "Hammerklavier" strip, dating to Jan. 25, 1953. You will see the title page to the first-edition score of

See **PEANUTS**, Page 4

'Schulz's Beethoven, Schroeder's Muse'

When: Saturday through July 31.
Where: Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, San Jose State University, East San Fernando and South Fourth streets

Times: Admission is free. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesdays; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays; 1-5 p.m. Saturdays. For more information: www.sjsu.edu/depts/beethoven or 408-808-2056.

Special event: The public is invited to Friday's opening reception at the Beethoven Center. Pianist Craig Shepard, a Beethoven specialist, will perform. Jean Schulz (widow of cartoonist Charles Schulz) and Irma Brilliant (co-founder of the Beethoven Center) will cut an opening ribbon. The reception is 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., tickets are \$57 (\$42 deductible), and proceeds go toward offsetting the costs of the exhibit. 408-808-2058.

MATCHMAKING | Search for marriage

Continued from Page 1

catch you a catch — providing you've got the scratch.

Rent-a-Yente services like Ma's bring the human touch back to an enterprise that had moved increasingly toward cold computerized calculus — sexual attraction by the algorithm method. Serving the Valley's Indian community, Jasbina Ahluwalia's Palo Alto-based Intersections Matchmaking arises from a tradition of forged alliances as ancient as the arranged marriage itself.

Matchmaking in ethnic enclaves may not be new, but it's a growing part of the Pay-For-Play-Pal market dominated by high-end services such as Marin's mother-daughter matchmakers, Jill and Amber Kelleher, and Linx Dating, which seeks to match successful valley nerds with dateworthy San Francisco women. Ahluwalia and Ma add a pinch of romantic accommodation and a helpful nudge toward the altar, adding a little love American style to what can otherwise seem like a hard-target search for anyone with a pulse.

Almost all of Ma's female clients are Asian, but surprisingly, more than half the men, who pay fees up to \$1,000 for long-term membership in Your Asian Connection, are Caucasian. In fact, Ma's business depends in large part upon white men who want to marry Asian women — a group often derisively referred to by American-born Chinese women as "Asia-philes."

Most of the women who come to Your Asian Connection are recent immigrants, though an increasing number are what Ma calls "ABC," or American Born Chinese. Hardly any Caucasian women want to date Asian men, Ma says. And the feeling is mutual.

"Most Asian men feel they couldn't handle Caucasian women," she says. "In most Asian families, the man is in charge. Here it's equal."

That is but one of the cultural quirks that must be factored into every prospective alliance, because attitudes toward the opposite sex vary widely from one country to another. It is correspondingly rare for Ahluwalia to be contacted by Caucasian men seeking Indian brides. Both matchmakers do exhaustive interviews with potential clients, but Ahluwalia — who charges as much as \$2,500 to serve as an ongoing concierge of concupiscent — only signs up those she feels she can successfully match.

"Who you end up with affects you the rest of your life," Ahluwalia says. "It's a huge thing. And yet people allow themselves to just fall into a relationship. It's interesting that we spend so much time getting into the schools we want, or the careers we want, but people don't spend that kind of time thinking about what's important to them in a partner."

One of her female clients, a 34-year-old pharmacist from Milpitas, came to Ahluwalia after trying several



PATRICK TEHAN — MERCURY NEWS

Julia Ma talks keeps folders of profiles of single men in her office in San Jose.

"It's interesting that we spend so much time getting into the schools we want, or the careers we want, but people don't spend that kind of time thinking about what's important to them in a partner."

JASBINA AHLUWALIA, MATCHMAKER

"In the Bay Area, lots of people are looking for a partner for reasons other than romance. I think if you put love first, the rest will come. But my clients say, 'If you only have love, you don't have money.'"

JULIA MA, MATCHMAKER

Indian dating Web sites as well as Match.com and eHarmony. "You'd think it would be easy in Silicon Valley to meet somebody Indian," said the woman, who asked that her name not be used. "After a while, I began to wonder if I was putting something out there."

She didn't find a match through Ahluwalia's service, but she did get valuable feedback after one arranged date. "I wanted to deck the guy after I heard how trivial his complaint was about something I said that he misinterpreted," she says. "I took it as, 'Maybe I don't need to be so honest next time.' But hearing Jasbina say, 'Here's what you're expecting, and here's reality,' helped me adjust my focus a little bit."

Matchmakers sometimes have to tamp down customers' expectations. "Sometimes the girls are in a dream," Ma says. "They come here with high expectations. I try to make them think about real life."

Men are even more finicky. Doctors and lawyers often will only agree to meet someone who has an American education, and they pile on other restrictions, too: no kids, certain body types, not too old, must like cats. "I have a guy who lives in Sunnyvale, and says no way will he go to Oakland," sighs Ma. "So you

have lots of limitations."

One thing that connects modern matchmakers to their Yente forebears is that their goal is to create marriages. Alex (who asked that his last name not be used), lost his first wife to cancer in 2006, and found himself alone in his early 50s. After experimenting with several dating Web sites, he gave up. "The trustworthiness of what's in people's profiles is very limited," he says, "and it's very superficial. Everybody lies."

He spent several thousand dollars on a membership in the quasi-matchmaking service Table for Six, but he wanted a woman who shared his cultural background — he's from Taiwan — and found few Chinese women there.

After Alex found Ma's service in a Chinese-language newspaper, and paid \$600 a year for an unlimited number of dates, he attended speed-dating gatherings, and went on two camping trips that included rafting and dancing — fortunately not at the same time. "I found an abundance of people I could date," he says. "It was a big difference."

It took him nine months and about 15 women before he met Hsing, to whom he was married in 2007. Ma attended the reception.

Alex and Hsing were closely matched in age, but when the man is American and the woman is Chinese-born, the man often is 15 or 20 years older. "One thing that works out OK, most Asian girls are very flexible on age," Ma says. "I think that may attract a lot of the Caucasian guys who come to my service. Because in American culture, Caucasian women are not dating older men. Asian women think older men are more stable, and financially they're doing better."

Ahluwalia — who puts all her clients through a criminal-background check

— presses each one on his or her preferences and prejudices. It's part of a refining process that is unlikely to take place in a standardized online questionnaire. "Nobody likes to see themselves as racist," she says, "but if you can't picture yourself with someone because of their race or whatever, don't waste everyone's time."

Not surprisingly, people who pony up thousands of dollars to find a companion often are likelier to have their feet on the ground than their heads in the clouds.

"In the Bay Area, lots of people are looking for a partner for reasons other than romance," Ma says. "I think if you put love first, the rest will come. But my clients say, 'If you only have love, you don't have money.' People here are not so easily falling in love."

Contact Bruce Newman at bneuman@mercurynews.com or 408-920-5004.

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