

Lifestyles

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Steven R. Nickerson/Rocky Mountain News

Michele Fields, left, discusses a questionnaire with a new client, who identified herself as Laizn. Fields estimates she's helped arrange about 20 marriages as a professional matchmaker.

By Rebecca Jones

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

Michele Fields' appointment wasn't until 2 p.m., so naturally she got there 30 minutes early to scope out the restaurant.

The Rattlesnake. Pricy, good-looking patrons, heart of Cherry Creek. Place like that's a good spot to find a sumptuous Catch of the Day.

And we don't mean fish.

"I just like to look around a place like this to see if there's anyone single," says Fields. "My pharmacist — sweetest guy in the world — his wife left him. Four kids. He married the second woman I set him up with. I've arranged dates for my lawyer. I tried to get my gynecologist to let me fix him up, but he

clients, and since getting into the matchmaking biz full-time seven years ago, she figures she's batched about 20 marriages, and who-knows-how-many steamy nights.

There's no video to make, no computerized questionnaire, no Friday night mixers. Fields gets to know her clients and what they're looking for in a mate the old-fashioned way: She asks lots of nosy questions.

"OK, how religious would you say you are?"

"What are your political leanings — middle of the road, liberal, conservative?"

"How do you feel about evolution? How about astrology? Karma?"

"What's your relationship with your mother?"

"Are you most comfortable with intellectuals or average folks or professionals? What about blue-collar types?"

Then the biggie: "Do you like pets? Do you have any allergies?"

"Pets — now *that's* important to single people," she says. "I don't think most dating services ask about that."

"She got into the deep nitty-gritty," recalls Donna Zurek, a 38-year-old Westminster computer programmer who was introduced to her husband, Gary, by Fields seven years ago. They've been married for four years. "Some of the sex questions I think were a little personal, but it was important to ask. Stuff like 'Do you want a sexual relationship? How do you feel about living together without being married?'"

"It wasn't like she looked into her crystal ball or anything," says Gary Zurek, 35, also a computer programmer. Donna was the first woman Fields introduced him to; Gary was the fifth man she'd found for Donna. "She just gets a good feel for the indi-

CATCH me a CATCH

Matchmaker uses old-fashioned 'nosy' approach to find singles mates

eggs to let me talk him up, but wasn't interested."

"I'm Jewish," she says, slipping into a booth with a good view of the entrance. "It's in my blood."

Fields, 40, is a yenta, a matchmaker.

She doesn't advertise. She's not even in the phone book. Her business is through referrals only. She works out of her home.

But for \$500 — plus \$35 per introduction — she'll find you a mate. And if the first person she finds for you isn't quite what you had in mind, no problem. She'll keep looking. Once you're her client, she's your yenta until death or marriage, whichever comes first.

"I have one girl who won't date a guy with small hands," she says. "So I have to spend time looking at hands."

At present, she's got about 200

Don't play by 'The Rules'

The hottest new relationship book tells women that if they want to marry, they must play hard to get.

But don't believe everything you read, says Denver matchmaker Michele Fields.

The best-selling *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*, contains some valid points, but its premise is shaky, says Fields. Rules such as "Don't talk to a man first" and "Don't accept a date for Saturday after Wednesday" often will send a suitor the other way, says Fields.

"The overwhelming complaint men have . . . is that a woman did not return their calls, does not call them, takes too long to return calls . . ." says Fields.

"Some men find it intriguing to encounter an aloof woman and may consider it a challenge. But if they conquer that challenge or it goes on too long, they lose interest."

Some of the behavior the book advocates, such as "don't return his phone calls," Fields calls "downright rude."

Bottom line, says the matchmaker: "Read *The Rules*, pick out the ones that make sense and are not rude, and be a smart girl, not a 'Rules' girl."

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just gets a good feel for the individuals she tries to match up. She has a skill not many people have."

All of which begs the question: Why is Fields — blond, thin, refined and beautiful — still single?

"The agenda of the men is too superficial," says Fields, who was married briefly 20 years ago. "I'm not what they're looking for."

"Of course, I *do* get first crack at them," she says of her male clientele. Occasionally, she'll date a client. But aside from the one who broke her heart not so long ago, none of them has been what *she's* looking for either.

"I like real intelligent men, sophisticated," says the Delaware native who still feels spiritually planted on the East

See **MATCHMAKER** on 1

Yenta senses the potential in relationships

MATCHMAKER from 8D

Coast 15 years after settling in Colorado. "And I like jock-y guys — but don't be dragging *me* into it. It'd be fine if they'd go running or skiing or whatever and let me stay home. But *noooooo*, in Denver, everybody's got to do everything together."

"It's not going to happen for me in Denver," she says, resigned. "And I'm not gonna go moving just to find a guy. I'm not that desperate . . . But enough about me, let's talk about you. Are you seeing anyone?"

Fields is a savvy business-woman. In 1980, at age 25, she was a secretary visiting a friend in Washington, D.C. They went to a party, and it was filled with people from Denver. "They were all wearing cowboy boots," Fields says. "I thought, 'Wow. This is pretty exciting.'"

On a lark, she moved here, having no job, knowing no one.

She got work as a legal secretary. She also drove a limousine, did some modeling, handled public relations for a motorcycle track.

The matchmaking she did for free.

By 1989, she looked around at the dating services that came and went in Denver and decided she could do better, cheaper.

"I don't need a staff, I don't need an office, I have no overhead," she says. "I started by just bugging my friends. Everybody knows somebody who is single."

She's been doing it long enough that she feels she knows when people are making relationship mistakes — both in whom they choose and in whom they don't choose.

Men want young and thin — and they're often setting themselves up for disappointment when they won't consider anything else, she says. "The guys who are real, who are into values and goals, are the ones who get married off."

"Women are much more open," she says. "Men think women just want someone with money, but I've never found that in seven years. The most they will require is that the guy makes the same as they do — and that's not unreasonable. No, the women's real agenda is height and hair. Short men and bald men have a harder time."

Then again, you just never know.

"I had one male client, a banker, who was not, uh, overly marketable. He wasn't great looking, and he was awfully shy and quiet. I introduced him to this one woman I'd made a lot of matches and she didn't like any of

them. Well . . . they got married."

All in all, the dating scene hasn't changed much since Fields first stuck her nose into someone else's love life. Prejudice against smokers of both sexes has increased. Identification with organized religion seems to have decreased, she says.

"I'm getting a lot more clients now 50 and older who have never married," she says. "And a lot of men with sole or primary custody of a child. And cats! I see a lot more men with cats these days."

Michele Fields' dating service is called Bon Jour Inc. For information, call 337-9558.