

NOB HILL GAZETTE

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The Art of Perfect Pairing

People have been searching for their soul mates ever since Eve first appeared in the Garden of Eden. Now, imagine if both Adam and Eve had been subjected to a rigorous personality profile and compatibility test. Would Eve have proved to be Adam's perfect mate?

Check the box marked "no."

Fast-forward a few thousand years to modern times. In today's world we get to choose our own partners without the pesky (but often times wise) interference of family or community members. Romantically, we are going it alone, or so it would seem. But the Internet, with its world wide web of interaction, has filled that now obsolete, traditional void with a virtual plethora of partnering sights, the most popular sites being Match.com and eHarmony.com. But there are still real places for individuals desiring the personal touch. The three matchmaking services featured below do just that, each in their own unique style.

Pari Livermore, a sunny blonde with gracious manners and a buoyant spirit, is a romantic at heart. She claims she comes by it naturally. Having grown up in the Midwest with two athletic siblings, she was always the one who played with dolls. Imagine Barbie marries Ken in a child's garden of delights.

That was Pari's reality. She attributes her starry-eyed nature to her grandmother, the original family romantic, who read love poems to her by Shelley, Keats, and the Brownings.

Heady stuff for a young child, but it left an impression on Pari that shapes her life and outlook to this day. Pari (which means "equal") believes in positive thinking, and the power of love. For her, the glass is neither half empty nor half full, but "absolutely overflowing." So overflowing is Pari's world view and, gratefully, her circumstances (she is married to Putnam Livermore, a scion of one of San Francisco's oldest families), that she donates all of her proceeds from matchmaking to charity or asks her clients to donate directly to a charity of choice. She does no advertising and works from home; clients find her either via her party circuit or word of mouth. Silicon Valley is "her beat" and claims more male clients than female, an unusual twist. She won't accept anyone as a client unless she thinks she has at least ten to fifteen potential matches. Her book, *How to Marry a Fabulous Man*, is filled with encouraging maxims, anecdotes, true-life vignettes, and sound advice. Pari has initiated some 241 marriages and raised millions in charitable donations—and the heartbeat goes on. She is our very own Bay Area, "pay it forward" cupid.

Kelleher and Associates's world headquarters, founded by Jill Kelleher in 1989 and currently co-owned and run with her daughter, Amber Kelleher-Andrews, is located in Sausalito. The offices are functional, professional, welcoming, and user-friendly. Everyone in the office seems cheerful, courteous, and accommodating. One gets the sense that Jill could be not just a real life matchmaker, but also your best gal pal. Jill and Amber, a former actress, set up clients together with the business expertise of COO John Galloway. Kelleher has an international database that registers in the thousands and affiliate offices scattered throughout the United States and Europe. Considering that the company is one of the largest privately-owned offline matchmaking companies in the country, it manages to project a sincere, personal, and intimate atmosphere. A professional staff does

extensive intakes and profiling on prospective clients, but Jill and Amber's intuition and people skills remain the strongest assets. They run a hands-on operation and are personally involved throughout the process. They work with physically fit, addiction free, accomplished, and serious relationship-minded clients who think within what they call the "reality range." "If someone is a five and they're looking for a ten, it won't work," Jill states matter-of-factly. They confess that men are easier to work with than women because men simply want the basic facts, while women want to know more. Both sexes, however, are looking for that someone special with positive and supportive values—and are willing to pay for it.

Membership begins at \$10,000 and escalates depending on the length of the contract and requirements of the individual. If something doesn't work out within the specified time, they have been known to stretch the contract. Kelleher and Associates are rumored to work with well-known celebrities and business CEOs, but mum's the word. With a tagline of "exquisite matchmaking," the company works hard to find the right fit, and success is measured one couple at a time.

Valenti International headquarters is located in Rancho Santa Fe, a suburban bastion of old money north of San Diego. From the coded, gated entrance, along the winding driveway flanked by horses, and a lake with swans swimming and willows weeping, one glimpses the sprawling Mediterranean villa, home to Valenti International. After being greeted by a young receptionist at the massive front doors, one is led into the reception area decorated with plush couches and Persian carpets. After signing a two-page confidentiality agreement, one is ushered into the inner sanctum, Irene Valenti's office. Irene, attended by her son, Steve, is a petite blonde dressed in a black suit, who sits behind a huge French desk—it somehow seems to fit both her and the Valenti experience. She seldom does interviews, preferring to remain behind the scenes because the hallmarks of the Valenti experience are these sumptuous surroundings, combined with absolute confidentiality, and extensive profiling.

As part of the Valenti process, everyone from intake assistants to licensed psychologists to life coaches weigh in on prospective clients, the majority of which hail from the United States, Europe, and Canada.

Irene is the founder and intuitive mastermind, while her son is the technical side of the family business. They both emphasize that the Valenti experience, which they categorize as "matchmaking in the European tradition," is not for everyone and that you have to be ready. The strong impression is that matchmaking Valenti style involves discreet wealth mergers where both sides pay substantially. The fees vary, but usually run in the "six to seven figures." While Irene won't reveal the number of successes, regarding that as confidential, she does admit to plans for global expansion. Unfortunately, sixty percent of the company's client base work via phone or the Internet and never actually see the stunning Valenti property. If they did, they would understand that the Valenti International experience runs far deeper than just partnering. It is a way of life created by Irene for herself, her family, and a certain clientele.

Finding that special someone is a perpetual challenge.

And though timeless (often hilarious) stories and experiences do result from blind dates with well-meaning friends' most fantastic, newly single co-workers or finding out that that guy you've been emailing through Yahoo Personals really isn't 6'3" and a former professional underwear model, at some point it's time to get serious. So, when friends and online dating algorithms aren't serving up chemistry that clicks, and you're ready for the real thing, matchmakers may have just what, or rather, who, you're looking for. In these times, and in a city like San Francisco, with everything being go, go, go, sometimes love needs a little help, in the form of an awesome database, and some well-practiced intuition.