

ninepatch: A Creative Journal for Women and Gender Studies

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Awakening*

Article 4

7-10-2012

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Recommended Citation

Nixon, Kate (2012) "Ah, the Single Life," *ninepatch: A Creative Journal for Women and Gender Studies*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <http://encompass.eku.edu/ninepatch/vol1/iss1/4>

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Ah, the Single Life

Cynthia, one of my co-workers, is going through a divorce, and whenever she shares some of her experiences as a newly single woman, her words trigger a sudden flashback to my own divorce. Like her, I was about the same age when my marriage ended and divorce forced me to begin a new job. But a lot has changed in the past ten years.

The good news is today there seems to be a stronger social network for single people. When Cynthia tells me about all the support available to her, she has a difficult time believing how it used to be “back in the day.”

In the rare quiet moments of the insurance office, she sometimes asks for another story.

Yesterday I recounted the aha moment from my ballroom dancing class. The write-up in the newspaper made the class sound so good. When I read the notice, I replayed scenes from old movies with men in tuxes and women in floating long dresses that swished around their ankles. I wanted to be one of those women. Another plus was the price the junior college in southern Indiana asked. It was indeed reasonable on a divorcee’s budget. Best of all was the chance to move forward and meet new people, just as all those books on divorce recovery preached.

I reached for the phone to register but stopped. I realized that in all those old movies, every woman had a partner. I reread the notice and saw no mention that you had to supply your own. It wasn’t even implied. But I thought I’d better be sure. So I called.

The receptionist made my day when she said, “No partner is necessary.”

“Good, I’d like to sign up.”

“Give me your name and credit card number.”

I did.

“You’d better give me your phone number or email, just in case.”

“In case of what?”

“We may have to cancel the class if not enough people sign up. But don’t worry. We’ll issue a refund, if that happens.”

“How many people have registered so far?”

“You make eight.”

“And how many do you need?”

“At least two more by Friday. So spread the word.”

I called seven women friends. Some were from nearby towns. I laid it on thick about the gray winter and how we should not hibernate in our caves. I urged we needed to get out more. Move off the couch and get some exercise. It worked. I recruited two single friends and one who was married but might as well have been single based on the quality and quantity of time she and her husband spent together.

The four of us showed up for our first session and met our fellow dancers, five couples from age thirty to seventy and one single man, Ned. He had divorced last year. I knew this because we were all from the same small town and his son was in my

daughter's third grade class. In fact, she even had a crush on him although he told her he was going to be the Pope and could never marry.

Ned and I only had a moment to nod before the instructor started us off with the fox trot. We repeated his steps and practiced solo. Then we paired off and rotated partners at his command. It was fun, one of the best times I'd had in my post-divorce life.

But the next week did not even come close. Not one married man rotated when asked by the instructor. Those wives were not into sharing.

Cynthia laughed. "So you quit the class?"

"No way, I wasn't giving in that easily. My three friends and I divided our time between Ned and dancing backwards for eight weeks by ourselves."

Since the class, I've never had the chance to practice any of those dance steps in real life with a partner, let alone wear a fancy swirling dress. However, my friends and I continue to laugh about our experience of dancing backwards, solo.

Those eight weeks became our symbol of living the single life.

Kate Nixon, a transplanted Hoosier from Southern Indiana, and her husband live in southwest Florida where she teaches. They share their home with the pet dog they adopted from the Humane Society. Kate has discovered the climate and beach have awakened the urge to create and write.

