

# The Night We Met



We know you love to hear how readers met and fell in love, so just for Christmas here are stories from two readers who met through that wonderful charity, Contact the Elderly, which organises tea parties for people who are isolated.

## Lost And Found

JOHN and I lost our partners around the same time — about six years ago. John was a volunteer driver for a Contact the Elderly group, and at that time I was invited to join as a guest, because I was feeling lonely and lost. We met on the *Highland Seagull* barge, which takes groups cruising on the Caledonian Canal.

When John was admitted to hospital after an accident which affected his hearing, I visited him regularly. He had to go in a second time for a cataract removal, and I helped him once again. Subsequently, he was always losing his hearing aid and putting down his glasses where he couldn't find them. He would then phone to ask where they would be — pretty frustrating for both of us at either end of a phone!



One night, whilst visiting John, there was a bad snowstorm and John suggested I stay in his spare room as it was too bad to leave. I agreed, and together we found things a lot easier. I was on the spot, and able to help find the lost hearing aids and glasses!

We have been together ever since.

— M., Highlands.

## It's Good To Talk

IT all started on the phone, actually. Having decided that using my car just for my own purposes was too selfish, I found a volunteer group which needed drivers locally — Contact the Elderly. The group leader rang to welcome me and to discuss which ladies I would be allocated. I liked his voice immediately — it reminded me of a cartoon character from my childhood (Snagglepuss? The Wizard? I just couldn't place it).

A few weeks later, I pulled up outside a house in Hertfordshire for my first tea party where I met all the other drivers and, of course, the group leader. He had a friendly face which matched the voice perfectly.

Tea parties are special events, normally without the small talk that usually happens when strangers meet regarding family, etc. So it was some months later — after many conversations about whether Nellie needed a scone, or Nora another cup of tea, and, of course, many more phone calls — that we finally went out for a drink together, just the two of us. One thing led to another, and eventually we announced to a surprised Contact the Elderly gathering that we'd been quietly married.

I knew that a man who had been happy to spend his Sunday afternoons taking people to tea, and who always rang when he said he would, was a good — and rare — find. He's never let me down.

Contact the Elderly — lovely people, fabulous teas, and (for me) a terrific husband! What's not to like?

— Mrs A.N.P., London.

## Who are Contact the Elderly?

Contact the Elderly is the only national charity solely dedicated to tackling loneliness and social isolation among older people. They do this by organising monthly Sunday afternoon tea parties for small groups of older people (aged seventy-five plus) who live alone, and volunteers within their local community. If you are interested in attending a tea party or volunteering your services for one in your area, you can find out more on their website [www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk](http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk) or by telephoning 0800 716543.



# A Present For Milly

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button on the handle, and she pushed it tentatively, which made the whole thing start to flash, on and off, on and off, like a beacon. She squealed with laughter, like an excited teenager, and waved it in the air.

"Now I'll be able to see to brush them in the dark!" she said, and we all burst into fits of laughter.

WE had a lovely Christmas. They made me feel just like one of the family. The soya substitute turkey dinner, cooked specially for me, was delicious, the fire burned in the grate, the dog snored and snuffled noisily for most of the day, and the idyllic country life was all I had imagined it to be, and more. The next morning I ate my egg from my new purple egg cup, with my name written in big swirly white letters on the side, and Neil ate his from the blue one.

"I'm so glad you didn't waste your money on expensive presents," Milly said to me as we got ready to drive away. "You've given me the best present you possibly could, now I know that my Neil has a lovely girl like you to look after him!"

We kissed and hugged goodbye, the compass in pride of place on the dashboard as we pulled out of the drive and headed north on to the lane. As soon as we got home to London I would send Milly flowers. Oh, not one of those huge, expensive bouquets, wrapped in yards of ribbon and smelling like a florist's shop. That would be sure to embarrass her — I realised that now. Just a simple posy. A few sweetly scented, pretty blooms that she could pop into a vase on her windowsill, with a little card attached to tell her how much I had enjoyed Christmas, and to say thank you. I think she'd like that.

And the bracelet? It never left my pocket the whole time we were there. But, I must say, I was very, very pleased I'd kept the receipt.

The End.