

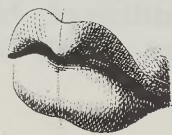
Of course, some of these social encounters could prove awkward. Many of us have breezed into a gathering only to realize that the faces are familiar to use for the wrong reasons, and it would be lovely to retreat. Perhaps we could agree to "take dibs" on limited openings for guests at various local events which attract too many incestuous networks, like reserving seats. Of course, if we restricted attendance by people who had touchy connections with other guests, we could end up with no guests at all! On the other hand, the Everybody's Business Syndrome has its advantages: You don't need references or introductions in this town. If you meet someone new and intriguing, chances are your best friend has a personal observation, or your ex-involvee now works with him/her.

How do we sift apart all these threads and maintain some honor, distance, and privacy without laughing hysterically all the time, or turning down every invitation? A shrink could help--but chances are that all these people are patients of your own shrink, as well.

Better, we think, to acknowledge the Gordian Knot that all our separate affairs have formed. There are some handy rules for safe singlehood in Asheville: no hard feelings; don't say it out loud; when talking sotto voice in public places, use pseudonyms; don't take anything personally; when in doubt, leave it out; avoid one-room parties; keep your own checking account; never derogate any member of your own gender; have your "night on the town" in another town; never sign your real name.

If you are new at Asheville Singledom, and eager to jump into action (such as it is), here are the sine qua nons of your Survival Kit: one large covered dish; a subscription to the Arts Journal; a UNC-A parking sticker; breakfast at the Athens or Sheraton once a week; drinks at Steven's Pub once a night; a parking space on N. Market Street; a house-under-renovation in Montford; a friend with a Jacuzzi; a six-pack of Moosehead in your refrigerator; membership in a spa or racquet club or the Y; Friday night visits to Ingles North to "catch up" on the social scene; and a bumper sticker that says "Recycle" or "Nuke the Whales."

Have fun, and good luck. We'll see you, no doubt, around town--lunching at High Soup, jogging along Cumbersome Avenue, or listed in the phone directory under your initials. Discretion, after all, is the better part of living in Asheville.



# Advice

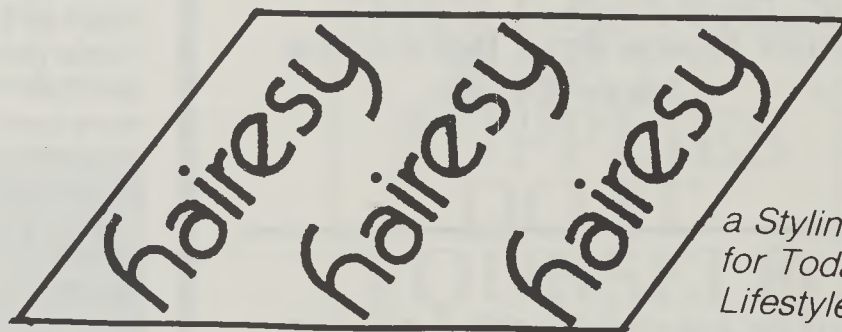


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