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Dating after 50? Jump in the pool -- Books tell women to be confident, take the initiative

Author: Mark Wolf Scripps Howard News Service

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You were dating when Paul McCartney was a young rocker and "When I'm 64" seemed like such a quaint song. Now you're dating again and he's an icon, which is what you are when you're 62 and still get to rock the Super Bowl halftime show.

And "When I'm 64" seems a lot more poignant.

Over-50 dating can be daunting, especially for those who are divorced or widowed and never expected to be in the dating pool at this age.

"You're in competition with a lot of younger women coming up behind you," said Wendy Salisbury, co-author of "Move Over, Mrs. Robinson: The Vibrant Guide to Dating, Mating and Relating for Women of a Certain Age" (Sourcebooks, \$9.95). "You have to have a lot of confidence, present yourself as well as possible, really be sparkling and as exciting as possible."

Ellen Freudenheim, author of "Looking Forward: An Optimist's Guide to Retirement," cites 2002 Census Bureau statistics showing that there are 146 unmarried women for each 100 unmarried men among 45- to 60-year-olds.

The numbers may be discouraging for women, but they needn't be defeating.

"My whole book is a kind of cheerleading that it's OK to be older," Freudenheim said. "I was surprised at! the strength of data about sexual activity among older people . . . I have the platform to say, 'Go, girl!'"

"Going" means being proactive for singles, especially single women, of a certain age, both authors said.

"If you haven't got a man in your life, live like one," Salisbury said. "You ask them (out). We're in the 21st Century. The way to get past (the anxiety) is just to do it. I think men still like the thrill of the chase, although a lot of guys like it when women ask them out."

Advice about where to meet a partner is similar for older and younger daters.

"We don't want to be hanging around in bars," said Salisbury. "Look for art gallery openings, book clubs, evening classes. You're going to be able to meet people with shared and common experiences."

And older singles have a new resource for companionship: the Internet.

Match.com says membership for ages 50 and over boomed by 322 percent from 2000 to 2003, and about 101 percent of its members are over 50.

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