

Hello, Pari!

BY ALAN DEUTSCHMAN

If you're a well-to-do single guy in the Bay Area, does Pari Livermore have a girl for you. All for a good cause, of course

The red Toyota MR2 raced through San Francisco, running lights, careening wildly in pursuit of a motorized cable-car replica. The mock trolley was filled with gorgeous Asian women, whom a banner proclaimed MISS CHINATOWN RUNNER-UPS. The convertible veered alongside. Its passenger, a fiftyish blonde with a Martha Stewart haircut, thrust a pad and pen at the nearest beauty, shouting, "I have a very rich and very wonderful man who wants to meet you! What's your name and phone number?"

The cable car lurched away, but that didn't discourage Pari Livermore. Nothing does. Utterly uninhibited, maniacally driven, exuding an irresistible, breathless enthusiasm, she accosts attractive women wherever she sees them—walking on the street, jogging by San Francisco Bay, alighting from buses, shopping at boutiques, sitting in nail salons and doctors' waiting rooms.

The Miss Chinatown runner-up got away. Her loss. She could have gone on a date with one of Silicon Valley's hottest entrepreneurs, a guy who had charged Pari with finding him a smart, athletic Asian beauty ready to have chil-

dren. Pari ultimately succeeded in luring a seemingly made-to-order mate for the man, Steve Kirsch, who currently runs his third successful computer start-up, Infoseek, a popular service for searching the Internet.

The Kirsches were number fifty of the eighty-nine marriages Pari Livermore has spawned, a tally that's increasing at a rate of about one a month. She's one of the best-kept secrets of the West Coast's new elite—the matchmaker of choice among the high-tech millionaires of Silicon Valley. A former TWA flight attendant, she set out to recast herself as a San Francisco society matron—and found that business titans would contribute generously to her charity events if in exchange she introduced them to an onslaught of beautiful women.

Pari sets up a select cadre of about forty single men. Her star bachelors have included the billionaire Larry Ellison, chief executive officer of Oracle, the world's second-largest software company; Scott McNealy, CEO of Sun Microsystems, the largest manufacturer of computer workstations; and Frank Caulfield, a founding partner at Kleiner Perkins Caulfield & Byers, Silicon Valley's most powerful venture-capital firm, renowned for bankrolling start-ups such as Compaq, Genentech, Sun, America Online and Netscape. Though now married, Microsoft's Bill Gates is still one of the biggest donors to Pari's circuit of lavish for-charity singles parties.

For weeks Pari refused to cooperate with this article, proud of her discretion and fearful of alienating her prime sponsors. One CEO told her that he didn't want his female secretary to realize that his frequent calls to and from Pari were really about dating, not charity. Many of Pari's top givers, who ante up \$10,000 or more a year, don't attend her events or even allow her to list their names in the programs. "They just want to go out on the dates," she says.

Pari's men should realize that she agreed to an interview



only because I already had the inside scoop. In the interest of full disclosure, I must reveal that I, too, was one of her forty men. During my tenure as the Silicon Valley correspondent for *Fortune*, I learned of Pari from another of her bachelors, Larry Ellison's protégé, Marc Benioff, 32, Oracle's senior vice president of marketing.

The first time I met Pari, for lunch at a Nob Hill society haunt, she had scarcely settled on the banquette when she pulled out a computerized list titled "Special Friends": pages and pages filled with the names and phone numbers of hundreds of women, a pool large enough to fulfill any man's idiosyncratic requirements or fetishistic obsessions. Whatever I wanted, she could find it—any race, ethnicity, religion, height, age, body type, hair color, personality or profession.

Pari implored me not to be shy in my specifications. If I was turned on only by women with large breasts, for instance, I should say so. I blushed, barely managing to mutter something about "intelligence" and "a sense of humor." Pari began rattling off name after name, lovingly pitching each woman's qualifications, all from memory. After each description, she would breathlessly intone, "Oh, oh, ohhh," as she thought of yet another wonderful female waiting just for me.

I agreed to buy a \$500 table at her next benefit luncheon.

Unlike me, many of Pari's bachelors know exactly what they want. Infoseek's Steve Kirsch, a workaholic engineer, trained to be systematic and precise, wanted his bride to be Asian, intelligent, athletic, dynamic, young and ready to have children. He was referred to Pari by one of the forty: Arie Kurtzig, 52, who made a fortune in the '80s from the software company ASK (for Arie and Sandra Kurtzig, his former wife and business partner). "Pari knows every woman in San Francisco," Arie told him, only half-jokingly.

Pari implored Steve, "Tell me what you want, and I will find it." As he talked, she thought immediately of Michèle van Blitter. Pari had met Michèle a decade earlier, stopping the breathtaking Eurasian on a San Francisco sidewalk. Now 33 and working as a commercial real estate broker, Michèle had been engaged for six months to a man she met at one of Pari's singles parties—Gary Shemano, who headed Bear Stearns's investment-banking practice in San Francisco.

While setting up Steve with a succession of stunning women, Pari began discreetly asking Michèle's colleagues about the status of her relationship. Months later, after Michèle broke off her engagement, Pari called. "I have the perfect man for you," she said.

If he's 35 and single, what's wrong with him? Michèle asked.

"He's just extremely picky."

Their first date was a flop. "I was probably the twenty-fourth woman Steve had dated through Pari," Michèle recalls. "I thought he was on this mad dating circuit, this mission. He wasn't flirting—it was more like he was interviewing me. He was putting me under a microscope." For his part, Steve admits, "It was awkward because I had just been through twelve women and was more methodical than romantic."

By the end of their dinner, Steve realized that he could marry this one. He asked her for a second date—and she flatly refused.

Reenter Pari Livermore, who coached Steve about what

to say and how to act—and pleaded with Michèle to give the guy another chance. This time Steve sent flowers, prepared a candlelight dinner and complimented Michèle rather than battering her with questions.

They were engaged in three months, married in nine. Within two years, she gave birth to two daughters. The man she left behind, Gary Shemano, has since become one of Pari's top donors. For his part, Steve was so pleased that he recommended Pari to his old pal Scott McNealy, the head of Sun Microsystems.

Pari traces the roots of her matchmaking and social ambitions to her lonely childhood in the middle-class Chicago suburb of Park Ridge, Illinois. Born Pari Caldwell, the daughter of a small-time plastics manufacturer, she was vexed by poor eyesight. To this day, she claims to have almost no peripheral vision and badly impaired depth perception. Over the years, she learned to cope, developing instincts to compensate for her tunnel vision, but as a child Pari was a grand klutz, prone to tripping and spilling milk. Inept at sports, she was picked last or not at all for schoolyard games. Friendless and bookish, she sequestered herself in the attic through the hot Chicago summers.

She prayed to be popular, and puberty provided a second chance. As a teenager, blonde and pretty, Pari became a hit with her cousins' crowd at another high school, where no one knew her as the kid to ridicule. She began setting up her crosstown acquaintances with teens from her own school, Maine Township High East, where her contemporaries included Hillary Rodham and Harrison Ford. "I saw matchmaking as a way I could have friends," she recalls.

Thus began a quest that might have astonished even Dale Carnegie.

As a flight attendant for TWA, Pari impressed her coworkers with her prodigious memory, recalling the names of every passenger on the plane. After every flight, she handed out awards to each of her crewmates—Miss Congeniality, for instance, or Best First-Class Galley. "She tried to make everyone feel special," recalls Janet Fox, a flight attendant who often flew with Pari and who still has many of the award gifts, such as the hand-knitted caps that Pari worked on tirelessly during layovers.

Pari's loyal following among flight attendants provided the core of her ever expanding network—legions of energetic, pretty young women whom she could call on for seemingly any purpose. Tom Hannan, a San Francisco lawyer, met Pari on the street in the '70s. As a member of the Guardsmen, a prestigious men's club that donates money for needy children, he was a wipeout at fund-raising. So Pari mobilized a force of twenty-five cute flight attendants to sit behind tables on downtown sidewalks and solicit contributions on his behalf. Hannan became the organization's number-one rainmaker. The next year, Pari moved to New York—and the Guardsmen kicked out Hannan, who could no longer raise the money that was expected of members.

During her Manhattan years, Pari began to grasp how her

matchmaking hobby could accelerate her own rise on the charity circuit. She founded the SWIM Club, for Single Women In between Men. Once a month, SWIM would send an invitation to one of the city's wealthiest and most celebrated bachelors, informing him of a luncheon in his honor. The lucky man would be picked up by a limo, inside of which were a bottle of Champagne and a beautiful woman. When he arrived at the restaurant, the man found himself surrounded by a dozen women—flight attendants, models, actresses, attorneys. If one of the SWIMmers found the guy attractive, she would go to the ladies' room and write her phone number in a little book. At the lunch's end, Pari presented the book to the honoree and informed him that the purpose of their little club was to raise money for a certain charity. Would he make a donation in their names? "The guys couldn't put enough zeros on the check," Tom Hannan recalls.

In those years, whenever Hannan planned to travel on business, he called Pari, who maintained an A-list and a B-list of single women in every major city. "That resulted in many delightful evenings and weekends in far-off places," he remembers.

After a failed marriage, Pari returned to San Francisco in the early '80s and began hosting a continuous party at her flat near the Palace of Fine Arts—an endless string of luncheons, teas and soirees. "She had ten dates a day," recalls Catherine Wells, one of her roommates at the time. Once her suitors were smitten, Pari usually told them she wanted to be "just friends" but volunteered to set them up with other women, further expanding the roster of single people who clung to her.

Sometimes Pari would make a lunch date, agreeing to meet a man at his office. The guy would eagerly await a romantic tête-à-tête, then be shocked when Pari burst in with a picnic basket and a half-dozen single women. Within minutes she would cover his desk with a white tablecloth, set up wine bottles and a candelabra and introduce him to her friends.

Still flying for TWA, Pari somehow found time to earn a master's in English from Berkeley, thus enhancing her credentials for remarriage, and to launch a series of sidelines. For single male clients with a few hundred dollars, she offered to throw lavish parties "in their honor." Pari cooked, decorated and brought a score of attractive, single female guests. To prepare for the venture, she took catering classes, but her poor vision proved disastrous in the kitchen as Pari, unable to see what she was doing, knocked pots and pans to the floor.

Pari's ambition was to be a great hostess. She worshiped San Francisco grande dames like Charlotte Mailliard Swig and Dodie Rosekrans, but she knew that these women "had everything tied up" in the society crowd. As a flight attendant without wealth or social pedigree, she needed to be more creative.

Pari observed that two types were virtually absent from the charity circuit—single men and working women. She conceived what has since become her magnum opus, the Red and White Ball, a black-tie party honoring the Bay Area's most eligible bachelors. The ball would be organized by women with full-time careers, meeting at night, rather than by Junior Leaguers or matrons of the leisure class. Since its debut in 1986, the annual singles event—now up to 450 men and 450 women—has raised \$1.5 million for charity. The lucky bachelors of the forty all contribute generously. And the women who work the longest hours at organizing and running the ball tend to have the inside track on Pari's introductions to the biggest catches.

At her series of warm-up cocktail parties in the month preceding the ball, Pari's presence is hard to miss. Decked out in bold red, she'll seize a bachelor by the arm and forcibly drag him across the room in her impatience to put him face-to-face with a potential mate. It's an eye-catching sight: a powerful man letting himself be shepherded around like a boy in the tow of his mother.

Pari will seize a bachelor and drag him to meet a potential mate. It's an eye-catching sight: a powerful man letting himself be shepherded around like a boy in the tow of his mother.

With her formula in place—single men pay; single girls toil—Pari spawned a series of events that have made her a fund-raising power, adored and emulated by her network of career women and social climbers, often quietly denigrated and envied by some of the older-line society types. She runs the Points of Light benefit, honoring the top twenty-five volunteers in the Bay Area, as well as the Mentors Luncheon, honoring accomplished women who have inspired other women. She is the coproducer, writer and host of *Everybody's Angels*, a TCI cable-TV series about charity volunteers, and

she is the author of the soon-to-be-auctioned *Popping the Question*, a book of anecdotes about marriage proposals. But by far her most surreal creation is the annual Fall Fair, which an unsuspecting bachelor named Mark Goldstein discovered for himself.

Handsome, rich and only 35, Goldstein had founded Reality Technologies, which made on-line investment software that is now licensed by Fidelity and Charles Schwab. He sold the company to Reuters for eight figures and moved from New York to San Francisco with plans for a new Internet software start-up called NetAngels. On his second day in town, his old friend Marc Benioff at Oracle invited him to a black-tie affair at Shreve & Co., an elegant jewelry store near Union Square.

Goldstein found himself in front of a receiving line of the hundred most beautiful single women in San Francisco (as chosen by Pari's committee), each wearing a little black dress and pearls and carrying a bouquet of white Casablanca lilies. Goldstein was in shock. *Wow, I think I moved to the right town*, he thought. *This doesn't* (continued on page 270)

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(continued from page 233) happen in New York. He walked down the line, meeting the women one by one, exchanging phone numbers. Then, as a photographer readied his camera, the women swarmed around one man in particular, the cochairman of the Fall Fair, the most eligible bachelor: Larry Ellison. Goldstein later met up with the event's impresario, Pari Livermore, and joined her whirlwind social circuit. Now he's one of the forty, too.

Of the eighty-nine marriages she has helped arrange, the best match Pari made was for herself. In 1989 the TWA flight attendant wed Putnam "Put" Livermore, a gentlemanly intellectual and scion of one of San Francisco's great old-money families (as in Mount Livermore, on Angel Island, in the middle of the bay). His great-grandfather walked cross-country to California during the Gold Rush and went on to build dams and found one of the companies that evolved into Pacific Gas & Electric. Put, a land-use lawyer who negotiates deals to save the mouth of the Big Sur River, owns a Julia Morgan house on top of San Francisco's exclusive Russian Hill. With his four brothers, he shares an 8,000-acre ranch that overlooks the Napa Valley. Its fresh springs produce much of the water that's bottled and marketed under the Calistoga brand.

Put was 66 and had never married. Pari was 44 and looked much younger, with good skin and a well-preserved figure. "She's always been drawn to older men," says her longtime friend Janet Fox. Pari's mother also married a man two decades her senior—and later took to crashing funerals as a way of getting the first crack at seducing handsome widowers.

"Pari thinks it's wonderful when 60-year-old men date 30-year-old women," says Kathryn Copeland, a media consultant who helps Pari run the Red and White Ball. Many of the nubile youngsters in Pari's stable don't

like it at all, though. At least a half dozen of the women Pari set me up with were relieved and mildly astonished to find that I was their age rather than their fathers' age. And one of the few big complaints within Pari's circle is that she's biased toward women who are young and pretty, though she'll gladly set up men in their sixties and even seventies.

As an argument for Pari's position, there's no better proof of the viability of a May-December match than her own thriving marriage. "Pari is Miss Romance with Put," says Janet Fox. She fawns over him, calls him by pet names, like "my big Liver," sends him love letters through the mail and maintains an extensive collection of sexy lingerie. On "Topless Tuesdays," Put returns home to find Pari waiting at the door, topless and holding a balloon.

The Livermores are the kind of old-liners who are dedicated to public service yet who absolutely hate to see their name in the newspaper. When Pari was mentioned twice in one week by the *San Francisco Chronicle's* unfailingly respectful, gossip-free society column, "Put almost had a heart attack," she recalls. He remained nervous about this article. For her part, Pari tells me, with an uneasy mixture of humor and seriousness, "I don't want to be known as the Heidi Fleiss of Silicon Valley."

More like the Auntie Mame or the Dolly Levi. In the '70s, the young Pari discovered that Marion Tanner, the woman who inspired the Auntie Mame character, was languishing in a public nursing home in Greenwich Village, broke and abandoned. Pari visited, asking if she could do anything for the octogenarian. The real Mame yearned to go out for Chinese food, so Pari smuggled her out of the home, blankets and all, and Pari's boyfriend carried the sickly patient through the Village. Perhaps it takes one great eccentric to inspire another. ●

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