

Interviews by  
Barbara Lewis

Did you know that nearly a third of the marriage licenses issued in San Francisco go to couples who list themselves at the same address?

# If you're so smart

## IT WAS RELAXING

*Daisy: "I can't imagine our not having gotten married. We had all the accoutrements. We had a baby and a house and a car and mutual debts, and we'd been through the experience of having that baby together. Getting married made it possible for me to relax and forget about not getting married. Not getting married would have been torture. I'm a very paranoid, insecure person. There would have been too many insistent, internal questions."*

## IT WAS A MATTER OF STYLE

Ray, 29: "It was a matter of style, like wearing old clothes."

## IT WAS KARMIC

Alia: "Inayat and I had lived together, off and on, and after a while we began thinking vaguely of getting married. We realized we were meant to be together and if marriage was the external thing, if that was going to make it easier to live together, it was the right thing. A friend of ours was a numerologist, and he did our charts and looked at the two of them together. He told us that if we were ever thinking of getting married, we should do it right away. Your life runs in nine-year cycles and different principles are in charge during each of those nine-year cycles, so that at that time we were just beginning a new cycle. It was surprising how right everything felt all of a sudden. And I don't even follow numerology any more."

## IT WAS SEXIER

Virginia, 23: "Because I felt guilty every time we got in bed together. No. It was because my shrink told me I would never have an orgasm until I got married."

## IT WAS PRACTICAL

Lorna, 40: "At least then nobody could call our son 'that little bastard' again. And I wanted to be assured of financial help, to have support for my claims of our son's legitimacy. I wanted Frank to assume financial responsibility, and only in divorce proceedings would it be spelled out. I got my California divorce the following year. All the practical loose ends are tied up. It's the emotional entanglements which drag on."

## IT WAS MY PARENTS

Kate: "People in books always live together like this, but they don't have any parents. Like you know, my parents were always calling on the phone and demanding to know if I was actually living where I said I was living, and getting Pinkerton detectives on me. They suspected we were actually living together, so they got the Pinkertons out."

## IT WAS A CUTE TRICK

Louise: "Well, Ben didn't want to get married, but he was afraid of not getting married. He was always afraid of both, and to this very day is afraid of both, which I don't feel is so very crazy. If I had the complete freedom to feel that way I might feel that way myself."

*What moved him to eventually get around to marrying you?*

"Because I threatened to marry someone else, who I should have married, who is still pining away for me in L.A."

*And the threat of losing you was enough to make him want to get married?*

"Well, it was a combination of that and the watch."

*The watch?*

"The watch. This watch. Ben and I had broken up for the 42nd time several months before my birthday, which is at the end of April. It was on a Friday that year, just like this year, and I had a date with the other man who I should have married. Saturday I went out with Ben. We still saw each other occasionally. We went to Manka's restaurant in Inverness, and you can't get him near it today. We've gotten as near as five miles away and he turns around. He gave me this watch as a birthday present, which I knew was very expensive, and I told him I couldn't wear it, and he couldn't stand that so we went to Reno."

*Couldn't he return the watch?*

"Oh, I wasn't going to give it back to him, I just wasn't going to wear it."

*Because you couldn't wear an expensive watch given you by a man you weren't seriously involved with?*

"Right."

*But you could keep it without wearing it.*

"Of course. So we drove to Reno that night and got married."



# why did you get married?

## IT WAS CHEAPER

Daisy: "Not being married and living in the circumstances of marriage presented a lot of pressures. When I had the baby, the hospital put me in a room with another unmarried mother. People tend to identify you as an unmarried mother, or an unmarried couple. That becomes your public identity. It exposes you. Your other qualities are irrelevant. Your status becomes the business of any businessman. The house insurance was cancelled—we were a "poor moral risk." Insuring our car involved answering a lot of nosy questions from an insurance agent. I don't know why cohabitation makes you a poorer driving risk, but that's what the men who make up those tables have decided. And we couldn't file joint tax returns. Getting married closed a lot of doors. We became our own property."

## IT WAS JUST THAT I COULDN'T SAY NO

Francis: "He is such a great guy, I just couldn't hurt his feelings. We'd been going together for so long that it was too hard to get out of it. I really respect him."

## IT WAS EXPECTED

Sharon: "It was really me who pushed it. I don't like to admit it but despite all the other traditional things I'd rejected, I still felt that for a woman to be successful she had to be married. It's pounded into you for so many years."

## IT WAS COMFORTING

Angie, 19: "I was really insecure. I really needed a commitment from him, and a lot more too. But I still felt insecure afterward. I would have felt insecure no matter what he did. I'm not insecure now though, but that's because I've grown up, not because of anything he's done."

## IT WAS WRONG

"Confirmation Day was nothing. Graduation Day was nothing. My Wedding Day likewise. Typical, I've found, of life's "milestones." My Divorce Day was the first momentous occasion that made me feel good.

Unloading the marriage did it. Marriage is so heavy, it takes a good divorce to get out from under it.

It's sharing an identity that's the shitter. Folks relate to married people weird, mainly formally. Nobody drops in of a Saturday morning to rap. They wait for a dinner invitation.

You become jim and dotty, or dotty and jim. No longer JIM and DOTTY.

The poorest part of being one half of a whole, however, is what it does for relating to the other half. Nothing good. Being so bound to, responsible for and affected by, it's impossible just to let the other guy be. Marriage robbed us of ourselves. Divorce restored us.

As wholes, we're more content inside, outgoing to other folks and easygoing on each other.

Besides, should the oc-

## IT WAS EXPEDIENT

Mark, 21: "We got married because it was too much trouble not being married. We were living on Ashbury. Angie was seventeen, I was nineteen. If we even went for a walk after curfew, the cops would be after us, stopping us, asking us where we lived, who we lived with, what we were doing. And then they'd call Angie's mother. We decided it would just be a much simpler thing, being married. Then you're legally responsible for yourself, you can sign for yourself. Angie's mother could stop getting all pissed and embarrassed every time the cops or the high school authorities called her."

casation warrant, we can effortlessly feign marriage, sharing as we do, a marriage license, last name and roof. Not one word of untruth need be uttered.

Yes indeed, I like my divorce a lot, more even than my new hiking boots. It was cheaper too—\$21.50—to file under California's do it yourself dissolution law.

And the kindly judge signed our final divorce decree on our fourth wedding anniversary, giving us, at last, a reason to celebrate. It looks like the divorce might just have saved our 'marriage.'"

—Dotty Aiton

## IT WAS A STATEMENT

Katy: "I think the reason I finally got married was to show Ernie how deeply I felt. It's the strongest statement. You get to a point where nothing else will do."



Saying the Vows