

# For Emcee, There's No Limit To This Thing Called Love

By John J. Archibald  
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

When Mary Calder went to the manager of a St. Louis cable television company and suggested a weekly interview show about love, he didn't exactly turn her down. He said, "Yeah, but after one show, what've you got?"

"Can you imagine that?" Calder asked. "I said, 'Do you think love is that limited?'"

"Did I give him some ideas! I said how about, 'What Is This Thing Called Love, Anyway?' or, 'What Turns People On and What Turns 'em Off?'"

"Or how about a show that would tell women how and where to find love, especially a rich husband?"

"Or a show called, 'I Want to Get Close, But Hold It — Not That Close!'"

The cable executive was dazzled. He told Calder to work out the details and make sure there would always be a studio audience. And he wanted her to be the host.

Calder swears she resisted vigorously — "Oh, no! Not me, I'm not that sort of woman!" — but the executive was insistent ("I can make you a star"), and she agreed.

That was a year and a half ago and now the show, "Lovers," is carried not only by its originating company, American Cablevision, but by most of the other St. Louis cable systems, and Mary Calder is its relaxed, intimately involved emcee.

A recent program dealt with women who married younger men. Among the subjects were Geri, a woman about 40, and Tim, who said he was 8½ years younger. Geri was divorced and has three daughters. Tim used to be in a seminary.

On another show, Robert Blinder, a former rabbi who is now a psychologist, counseled viewers on how to make intelligent choices when searching for mates.

"If you date a man who is always passive," Blinder said, "know what to expect when you're married."

"You may slave for hours, selecting just the right wallpaper and putting it up. You'll show it to your always-agreeable husband and he'll say, 'That's not bad.'"

"You may want to kill him, but you shouldn't, because you set it up that way."

"A man who constantly lets his wife make the decisions, by the way, is far more likely to have an affair."

Calder expressed surprise, along with many in the mostly female audience.

"Sure," said Blinder. "He'll say, 'She made all the decisions for 20 years; I'll show her!' And he'll find somebody else."

"He'll look around for a depressed woman in a supermarket — you can spot them by their bedraggled hair and makeup and they look like a balloon with 40 percent of the air let



Mary Calder, host of the syndicated "Lovers" program.



Sam Leone/Post-Dispatch

Calder interviewing guest Dr. Jackie Holler on the subject of transactional analysis for one of the weekly segments of Calder's cable television show.

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out — and he'll ask her if she can pick out a good grapefruit for him."

From time to time Calder tosses in a reference to a personal experience that fits the topic — "Yeah, don't I know!" . . . "You can bet it hurts, baby!" Sometimes just a sympathetic nod does the trick.

"I didn't do that in the early shows," said Calder, who was married to former St. Louis disc jockey, Bill Calder, and has a daughter, 24, and a son, 18. "I thought I should give the audience the impression that I've always had it altogether."

"But I realized that was dumb. These things have happened to all of us and it's important to know that, so we can laugh at ourselves."

"Now I'm spontaneous. I blurt out whatever is on my mind. I've had some painful times, too, but let's get on with it. OK?"

The show "Lovers" attracts that fraternity of performers who seem to turn up on interview shows and nowhere else. People like Ronald "Pine Bear" Williams. Pine Bear said

he is part Choctaw Indian. He wears a hat with a feather in it to reassure non-believers.

Pine Bear is a seer, sort of. He talks to people's pets and through them reveals the ast.

In an episode of "Lovers" titled "Love at First Bite," Pine Bear consulted a dog named Custer, and then told Custer's mistress, "I see BB gun wounds. Be wary of neighborhood children."

According to the woman, however,

Custer's only attack had come at the hands of a surgeon who had operated on his hip bones.

"Umm . . . yes, I suppose that was what I saw," said Pine Bear. "I sensed some type of injury."

A cat named Buckwheat revealed more intimate information.

"I see a lot of nude bodies in the home," Pine Bear proclaimed.

"No, I don't think so," Buckwheat's owner said. "People in underwear maybe, but not nude!"

"Yes, you're probably right," Pine Bear replied, diplomatically.

There was good news for the owner of a cat named Puff.

"Puff wants you out of bed sooner than you want to," Pine Bear observed. "I see a new man coming into your home."

"I hope so!" replied the woman who brought Puff.

New topics for "Lovers" pop up every day for Calder.

"There's a nice young guy at the studio who's good looking, but is afraid to ask a girl for date," she said. "A few days ago a psychologist who does seminars on shyness heard about our show and asked if he could appear on it."

"I have a friend who can't break away from a bad relationship, even though the man hits her and goes with other women. The day after I talked to her I got a call from a specialist on love addiction, who wants to tell people how to get out of miserable situations."

You, too, can be on "Lovers," as a

spectator or as a participant.

"I want to do a show on women who go with married men," Calder said. "And I'd like to do another one about prostitutes. I hope I can get some volunteers."

"We'd disguise them or conceal them in the shadows, of course. Whatever they prefer."

In a list of past episodes of "Lovers" was one called, "How to Love a Multiple Marry-er."

"There's a lot of delicate problems in cases where you've been married a couple of times and maybe you marry a guy who's had several wives," Calder explained. "Like your daughter is getting married and she wants to be escorted down the aisle by your second husband, but you're not speaking to him. What do you do?"

Well, they predicted cable television would eventually solve most of society's problems. Brides-to-be who are facing this dilemma can count on a rerun of that "Lovers" program turning up somewhere. Just stay tuned.