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DATING AND WAITING: ONE WOMAN'S QUEST FOR 'THE ONE'

MEGAN CARSON GRADUATED from Furman in 2000 with an excellent education, great friends, and a fairy tale vision of the man she hoped to marry: tall, mannerly and Christian.

Men possessing those traits seemed common during her college years, when she wasn't quite ready to settle into a relationship, but they became more difficult to find once she moved back to her California hometown and began to navigate the complex world of dating.

Her dating travails became a blog that had her friends in stitches or groaning in sympathy. Soon, an acquaintance's father was offering her a book deal. The result: *A Year of Blind Dates*, published late last year by Regal. Subtitled *A Single Girl's Search for 'The One'*, the book details Carson's year of meeting other singles through what she wryly calls "The World's Best Dating Service."

The experience didn't go quite as she had hoped, but she is grateful for what she learned. "Before, I wanted to speed up the process," she says of finding her soul mate. "But I don't have that sense of urgency anymore. It's going to happen with the right person at the right time."

Carson still enjoys dating, despite some disastrous encounters with men that in the book earn nicknames like F-Bomb Bill, Messy Hands Mike and Penthouse Pete. "I'm still out there dating, and I'm open to a thoughtful setup," she says.

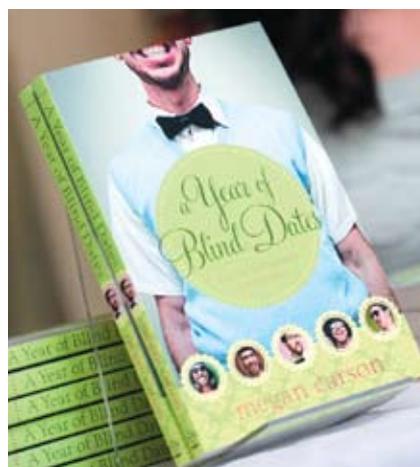
She was originally reticent about trying a dating service but was quickly swayed by the number of people who find love on-line. "If it could work for them, it could work for me," she says. So she signed up — and hoped that only her close family and friends would find out.

Carson went on a few interesting dates, but they got progressively worse. Friends found her musings so entertaining that they encouraged her to blog about

her experiences, and the year of dating she began in secret became public information.

She was surprised to find that writing about each date was helpful. "It became so therapeutic for me, to process it in that way," she says.

After a few months she hadn't found the man of her dreams, but she had something beyond her wildest dreams — a book deal. She signed the con-



tract in May 2008 and spent the summer fleshing out her blog entries.

"I don't take for granted that I'm really fortunate to be published, or that anyone is interested in my story," she says. "I'm still shocked that anyone other than my parents bought it."

People relate to her experiences, she says. She receives frequent e-mails from fans and hears their stories at book signings — including one this spring at Furman. "That was unbelievable for me, having a signing near the mailbox at Furman where I used to get my mail," she says. "It was an out-of-body experience."

Fourteen years earlier, Carson had traveled across the country to enroll at Furman thanks to parents who encouraged their kids to broaden their horizons. After older brother Keith '98 settled on Furman, she thought she might go elsewhere to forge her own identity, but a visit to the campus sealed the deal.

"The people I met were so friendly, and they

really made me feel like they wanted me to be there," she says. Brother Drew attended Furman as well and graduated in 2003.

The book showcases her love for her Furman years — especially its style. "I fell in love with the South and its preppy wardrobe," she writes. "Crewneck sweaters, polo shirts with popped collars, loafers with plaid skirts, khakis . . . what's not to love?"

She soon realized, though, that when it came to dating, her Southern-leaning fashion sense and old-fashioned values did not always mesh with her California-style aggression. "I was trying too hard, and these sweet Southern boys saw right through my efforts," she writes.

Carson continues to write — she still blogs at <http://megancarson.com> — but hasn't decided on her next project. "The first one just came to me. I didn't set out to do it," she says. A book about finally

meeting her match would make an ideal sequel, but perhaps that story would be better left untold: "I may want to keep that between the gentleman and me," she says with a laugh.

In the meantime, in addition to promoting the book, Carson teaches Advanced Placement world history at Capistrano Valley High School, her alma mater in Mission Viejo, Calif. She earned a master's degree in education from Concordia University while finishing *A Year of Blind Dates*.

Although the book doesn't have a fairy tale ending, Carson says, "I used to think my life would be great once I had the right relationship, but now I know the same issues will be going on. I've learned about what's important to me not just in a relationship but in life in general. I'm still waiting, but at the same time, I'm really enjoying my life where it is right now."

— LEIGH SAVAGE

Leigh Gauthier Savage '94 is a freelance writer in Simpsonville, S.C.