

So You Married a White Guy...

*Join the club! It's free.
Just verify your husband at the door.*



Haole Hubby Club founder Brandy Yamamoto with husband Marc Arcidiacono, who is of English/Irish/Sicilian descent, knew that if she started a club, interracial couples would join.



Lovebirds Joe and Bonnie Gardewin fell in love in 1973 Hawaii and paved the way for future interracial couples. Today, they live in Ohio and Joe jokes that Bonnie 'never pays retail or full price!'

'We are not our parents and we have to bring our two cultures together,' Nani Phoumisavanh said about her husband Pete whom she met in Hawaii while he was in the U.S. Air Force.



By **LYNDA LIN**
Assistant Editor

For all the Asian women married to Caucasian men, there is now the Haole Hubby Club. To join you need only show off the man on your arm. And although there are no membership costs or meetings to attend, the club does provide a forum for couples to rant and rave about sticky marriage issues, especially the ones that emerge when two different cultures merge into one.

For instance, does your Haole hubby recoil from the pungent scent of Durian fruit while you dream of digging your fingers into its squishy flesh? Just go to www.haolehubby-club.com and start pouring your heart out in the "Funny Food" section. There are already a handful of stories posted by women lamenting that their Haole hubbies don't understand delicacies like "Sinigang Na Baboy" (a Filipino dish with pork in sour broth) and Kalua Pig (Yes, it does kind of look like a pile of stringy leftovers).

You can also share your mortifying and funny stories about cultural differences in the "Culture Clash" link and direct your husband to the "Teach Hubby" section, which offers information to help dispel stereotypes about Asian wives. In each section, there are already dozens of stories posted by women and men who couldn't help but share their experiences with other like-minded couples.

The club taps into a growing demand for an interracial marriage forum. The number of interracial marriages is growing according to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, especially in the Asian wife/white husband category, so chances are you or someone you know may already be a member of the Haole Hubby Club.

Just ask Brandy Yamamoto, 32, who created the club in October 2003 with her cousins for fun. Yamamoto herself is married to English/Irish/Sicilian financial adviser Marc Arcidiacono whom she met while living in San Francisco. Her cousins were also

members of the unlikely sorority of women "married to big Haole men" and together they shared stories about the cultural bumps in their relationships. The cousins would point out other interracial couples and joke that they were "in the club" too.

Then Yamamoto decided to actually start the club.

"I registered the domain name and it just started out as a site for friends and family and then I started meeting more and more people who were in interracial marriages and then they knew other couples," said Yamamoto.

What started out as a joke between cousins mushroomed into a popular forum for couples to share

'I don't object to being called a haole ... I like the idea of having a place to sort of share stories,'
— Joe Gardewin, a self-proclaimed Haole hubby.

stories and photos. The images in the "Photo Album" link are a medley of smiling faces in weddings, on vacation and in pirate costumes but all sporting the same look of love.

The site also offers mixed families the opportunity to share baby pictures in the "Hapa Kids Club" and pays respect to older "trendsetter" couples like Joe and Bonnie Gardewin who met over "great pupus and cheap drinks" in 1973 Hawaii where he was based as an air force captain.

On their first date, Bonnie took her Irish American husband-to-be to a Korean market and over three decades later they are still self-proclaimed lovebirds.

"My wife and I both have what can be called strong and active senses of humor ... I don't object to being called a haole ... I like the idea

of having a place to sort of share stories," said Joe, who submitted a photo to the web site.

Yamamoto, a San Diego-based architect who works on the web site at night, said she receives so many submissions that she may expand to a newsletter. The club already offers merchandise for sale like Haole Hubby Club T-shirts featuring different hair colors to match your Haole man or woman and customized Hapa Baby products. Yamamoto said she recently sold \$600 worth of merchandise in one week. Now she's thinking about expanding the site by creating links to different ethnicities "because each culture has different issues."

But not all visitors to the site are fans. A previously posted "open letter" explained that the site is not meant to be offensive.

"A couple of people were saying 'Why are you treating a white husband like a status symbol?' I've been called a racist," said Yamamoto, adding that she was not surprised at the criticism because it is such a sensitive topic.

David Liu an engineer from Seattle said the club's web site is amusing, but reinforces the sexless Asian male stereotype. "Can an Asian brother catch a break?" he implored.

However, Yamamoto insists it's all in good fun. "It's not a dating site. It's not to encourage marrying a white man."

The web site includes a section for Asian men married to Haole women and a "Hubby Rant" link for men to vent about their wives to capture the other side of the stories. Although she received a few critical notes ("seven from the same person") and a few e-mails from men looking for Asian wives, overall she said the response has been positive. And members are quick to defend their club.

"People sometimes get a bit too uptight about racial issues. Something like [this club] shows the lighter side," said Joe. "If we lose the capacity to laugh at our foibles and idiosyncrasies, we have lost something pretty special and very valuable." ■

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