

maleCall

The things I do for you people!

I reckon if you guys could wangle 15 eligible women into meeting you for coffee or drinks over the course of six or seven weeks, it would cost you about



JAMES ROBERTS

Phoenix

\$130 (not including optional fresh underwear). I won't trouble you with the arcane higher math I used but my brain is still smarting from the effort.

So when I got a chance to attend "15 First Dates," I figured I'd take one for the team and see what all the fuss is about.

Now, I had not been hearing good things from my wide network of semi-reliable sources about the singles mixer scene, so I figured I'd give men and women alike a first-hand semi-reliable look at the speed-dating phenomenon.

Unfortunately, I didn't read the fine print very carefully.

What I attended was actually a singles "mingling" event, not the anticipated speed-dating I had promised my friends who were awaiting a report at their super-secret hideout later that evening.

That said, here's what I found at the Pizza Picazzo venue.

I was greeted and name-tagged by a gracious hostess who beck-

oned me to the heated patio where some 75 or so men and women were in full-mingle mode. I'd say the gender mix was about 50-50, with ages ranging from 30s to late 50s. The style was what I call "Scottsdale Intense" – that is, mostly black attire, but without the happy hour leather pants.

One attractive woman, a dark-haired college photography instructor, wore a bright holiday red sweater with her black slacks. Another woman accented her black top, black jeans and black

! ... "the ladies actually come to you!"

leather jacket with a beige feather boa.

The men held up their end well in leather jackets or sports coats and dress jeans with very few holes.

I have written before about the pitfalls of various ways to meet other singles at bars, supermarket produce departments, dark parking lots and so on. I'd have to say that this event manages to overcome a lot of the problems people have with those venues: smoke-filled meat-market ambiance, gals with their protective posses in trail, difficulty of having meaningful conversations, people of uncertain relationship status – and that's just in the supermarket!

The great thing about tonight's situation is that it's clear everyone is here for one reason: to meet

someone. And guys: the women come without their posses! Gals: the guys are cleaned up and on their best non-pawing behavior.

Although I purposely did not collect any digits, I do believe that phone numbers were exchanged. People who are naturally gregarious have a definite advantage, but for shy people, the hostess diplomatically offers to help out – "not that you need any help, James." In general, someone who likes your looks will find you.

The only problem, I think, is that people feel the need to keep scouting even after they've found a nice match. One guy whom I found

pouring drinks ("the ladies actually come to you!") pointed out a very attractive woman whose digits he had scored a few minutes before, busy talking to other guys. He said, "I'm not worried; I've got her number and I'll call her." I caught up with the gal as she was leaving. "He'll call. We had a great conversation." Later, at the debriefing, I gave my verdict: two hours well spent.

James Roberts is an over 40-something Phoenix-based writer, author of "On Being Eight Again" and "The Tao of Coyote." Divorced with no children, he has been exploring the dating scene and collecting tales of woe for many years. Need a guy's perspective? Jot a note to Male Call at jrobertspenn@aol.com.