

The only problem with the nuclear-submarine technique is that it's difficult to get a date with a girl who has never, technically, been asked. This is why you need Phil Grant. Phil was a friend of mine who had the ability to talk to girls. It was a mysterious superhuman power he had, comparable to X-ray vision. So, after several thousand hours of intense discussion and planning with me, Phil approached a girl he knew named Nancy, who approached a girl named Sandy, who was a direct personal friend of Judy's and who passed the word back to Phil via Nancy that Judy would be willing to go on a date with me. This procedure protected me from direct humiliation, similar to the way President Reagan¹ was protected from direct involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal² by a complex White House chain of command that at one point, investigators now believe, included his horse.

1. **President Reagan:** Ronald Wilson Reagan
U.S. president 1981-89.
2. **Iran-Contra scandal:** a case in which U.S. government officials were suspected of improperly selling weapons to Iran to raise funds for Nicaraguan rebel forces.
3. **ambience (am' be ens):** an atmosphere or environment,
4. **real-estate closing:** a meeting at which the rights to land or a building are officially transferred from seller to buyer.

Thus it was that, finally, Judy and I went on an actual date, to see a movie in 'White Plains, New York. If I were to sum up the romantic ambience³ of this date in four words, those words would be, "My mother was driving." This made for an extremely quiet drive, because my mother, realizing that her presence was hideously embarrassing, had to pretend she wasn't there. If it had been legal, I think she would have got out and sprinted alongside the car, steering through the window. Judy and I, sitting in the back seat about seventy-five feet apart, were also silent, unable to communicate without the assistance of Phil, Nancy, and Sandy.

After what seemed like several years, we got to the movie theater, where my mother went off to sit in the Parents and Lepers Section. The movie was called North to Alaska, but I can tell you nothing else about it because I spent the whole time wondering whether it would be necessary to amputate my right arm, which was not getting any blood flow as a result of being perched for two hours like a petrified snake on the back of Judy's seat exactly one molecule away from physical contact.

So it was definitely a fun first date, featuring all the relaxed spontaneity of a real-estate closing,⁴ and in later years I did regain some feeling in my arm. My point, Eric Knott, is that the key to successful dating is self-confidence. I bet that good-looking girl in your English class would love to go out move. So just do it! Pick up that phone! Call Phil Grant.