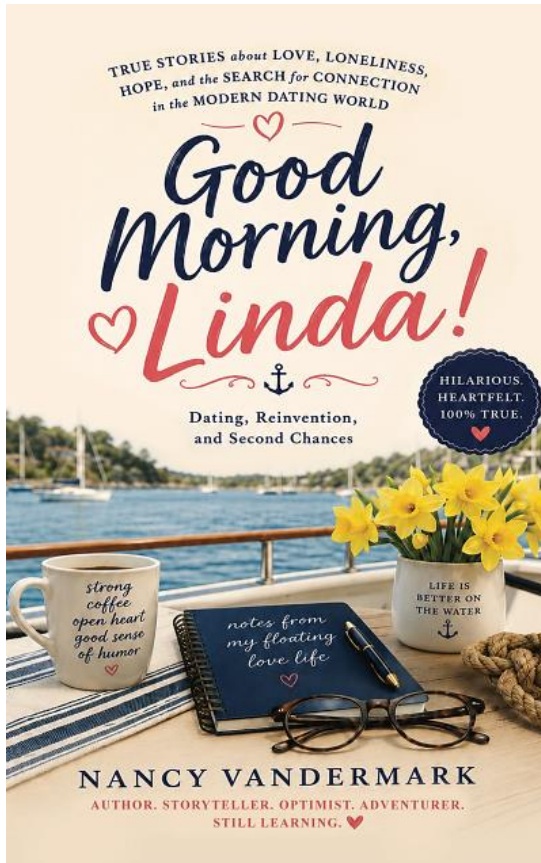




One mistaken text-"Good Morning, Linda!"-launches a hilarious collection of true stories about online dating, second chances, and discovering that life's best stories can begin long after sixty.

Good Morning, Linda!

By Nancy VanDermark

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TRUE STORIES about LOVE, LONELINESS,
HOPE, and the SEARCH for CONNECTION
in the MODERN DATING WORLD

—♡—
**Good
Morning,
♡ Linda!**
—♡—

Dating, Reinvention,
and Second Chances

HILARIOUS.
HEARTFELT.
100% TRUE.



NANCY VANDERMARK

AUTHOR. STORYTELLER. OPTIMIST. ADVENTURER.
STILL LEARNING. ♡

Good Morning, Linda!

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This is a work of creative nonfiction based on the author's lived experiences. Certain names, identifying details, locations, and characteristics have been changed to protect privacy. Some scenes and conversations have been recreated from memory.

The opinions expressed in this book are those of the author and are intended for humor, reflection, and storytelling purposes.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Instructions to the Reader.....	5
Good Morning, Linda	7
Angel Softly in My Ear.....	11
Does Your Wife Know You're Single?	15
Green Lights, Red Flags	23
Ghosted by Spinach	29
The Iced Tea Spoon Incident	37
Separate Caskets Over Calamari.....	43
The Mashed Potatoes Incident	49
Motorcycle Photography and Other Red Flags	53
Swiping Left	59
Recently Active	65
The Prostate Papers.....	71
Long-Term Relationships.....	79
Shit Happens and I'm Full of It.....	85
Carbon Dating.....	91
Proof of Life	97
Stay Recently Active	105

Acknowledgments	107
About the Author	109

Introduction

There comes a moment in life when you suddenly realize two things simultaneously:

First, absolutely nobody knows what they are doing.

And second, everyone is pretending they do.

This realization often arrives sometime after sixty.

By then, many of us have survived enough life to understand that adulthood is not a state of mastery. It is simply a long series of increasingly strange experiences navigated with reading glasses, cautious optimism, and lower back pain.

We have buried people we loved.

Raised children.

Lost marriages.

Found ourselves.

Lost ourselves again.

Reinvented our lives multiple times.

And still, somehow, we continue searching for meaning, companionship, decent lighting, and emotionally available human beings who do not photograph themselves beside dead fish.

This book began after the death of my beloved husband, when I eventually found myself doing something I once considered highly unlikely:

Joining online dating apps.

What followed was not merely dating.

It was anthropology.

Suddenly I was observing a fascinating modern tribe of mature adults attempting to present themselves as emotionally stable while quietly unraveling over tiny green lights, delayed text messages, frozen spinach, motorcycle photography, and deeply alarming dinner conversations involving separate burial arrangements.

At first, I believed I was searching for love.

Eventually, I realized I was searching for something much larger:
proof that life had not ended simply because it had changed.

The essays in this collection are funny because they are true.

Not always comfortable.

Not always flattering.

But true.

And beneath all the absurdity lives something deeply human:

the stubborn refusal to disengage from life, even after disappointment, grief, heartbreak, rejection, loss, or the

Good Morning, Linda!

horrifying realization that someone you genuinely adore may be emotionally possessed by mashed potatoes.

I did not write these essays because I have mastered aging, relationships, resilience, or human behavior.

Quite the opposite.

I wrote them because I am still learning.

Still laughing.

Still curious.

Still hopeful.

Still occasionally monitoring green lights like a romantic FBI operative.

And perhaps that is the point.

Because growing older is inevitable.

But remaining fully awake to life?

That part, thankfully, is still a choice.

Good Morning, Linda

Online dating after a certain age is less about finding Prince Charming and more about surviving a series of low-budget psychological documentaries.

At this point, everyone is tired.

The men are tired.

The women are tired.

The gay couples are tired.

The straight couples are tired.

The trans community is tired.

Even the catfishers seem emotionally exhausted.

Yet every morning across America, hopeful adults awaken, put on reading glasses, adjust compression socks, and whisper to themselves, “Maybe today.”

And so we continue.

I live alone on a vintage yacht, which sounds wildly glamorous until you realize I spend most evenings Googling things like:

“Can emotional unavailability cause acid reflux?”

Still, I remain hopeful.

A few weeks ago, I began communicating with a lovely man online. Thoughtful. Intelligent. Excellent grammar. No

visible motorcycle. No photographs taken in a gas station bathroom mirror. Very promising.

We exchanged long messages late into the night like two survivors floating on separate pieces of driftwood in the dark sea of modern romance.

Then one morning, my phone chimed.

I smiled.

There it was.

A message from him.

“Good Morning, Linda.”

Linda.

Not Nancy.

Not even close enough for a minor clerical error.

LINDA.

Now listen carefully: women know immediately when this happens that there are only three possibilities.

1. He is simultaneously communicating with multiple women.
2. He suffered a minor stroke while texting.
3. Linda was physically present.

Naturally, I did what any mature, emotionally evolved woman would do.

I stared at the message for forty-three minutes while conducting a full FBI-level forensic investigation of his punctuation history.

Had he used too many exclamation points lately?

Were his goodnight texts becoming generic?

Why did he suddenly stop asking follow-up questions about my childhood trauma and favorite jazz musicians?

The signs were all there.

Meanwhile, somewhere in America, poor Linda may have awakened to:

“Good Morning, Nancy.”

And honestly? That’s the real tragedy. Two innocent women accidentally trapped in the same group project.

Online dating is now essentially romantic musical chairs for adults carrying unresolved grief and blood pressure medication.

Everyone is trying.

Everyone is lonely.

Everyone wants connection.

And everyone, at some point, becomes Linda.

As for me, I quietly disappeared back into the witness protection program known as female dignity.

But I will say this:

If you are currently texting six women simultaneously, perhaps create a spreadsheet.

We're old enough now to appreciate organization.

Green Lights, Red Flags

Nobody warns you that online dating after sixty eventually turns stable adults into low-budget private investigators.

At first, the dating apps seem harmless enough.

You upload a few flattering photographs taken in merciful lighting.

You write a profile suggesting you enjoy “travel and laughter.”

You cautiously swipe through men holding fish, men posing beside motorcycles, and men whose profile photos appear to have been taken during the Clinton administration.

Then one day, someone begins to matter.

And suddenly the little green light appears.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to tell you:
the green light is not merely a feature.

It is psychological warfare.

For those unfamiliar with Match.com, allow me to explain.

A solid green light means:
ACTIVE NOW.

A white center with green around the circumference means:

RECENTLY ACTIVE.

This may sound insignificant to psychologically healthy people.

It is not.

Once feelings enter the picture, the little green light develops the emotional power once reserved for lipstick on a collar.

At some point, Match.com stopped being a dating app and became a low-budget intelligence agency.

Nobody intends for this to happen.

You begin innocently enough.

“Oh look,” you think casually, “he’s online.”

Three weeks later you are essentially conducting digital reconnaissance operations from your sofa while eating pistachios in full combat posture.

“He was active at 11:42 PM but disappeared between 7 PM and midnight on Saturday.

This can only mean one thing.”

At our age, nobody wants to admit they monitored someone’s green light.

Meanwhile half the population is running covert surveillance operations from the bathroom at 11:47 PM.

I know this because I personally descended into full behavioral analytics over a man I shall call David.

David and I had been seeing each other for quite some time. There were dinners, meaningful conversations, chemistry, affection, and enough mixed signals to destabilize a NATO alliance.

After every date, I monitored his green light.

Not casually.

Professionally.

I knew David's online activity schedule better than air traffic controllers know flight patterns.

If the green light disappeared for long stretches over a weekend, I immediately assumed he was with another woman.

Possibly two.

Possibly in Vermont.

My nervous system became so conditioned to that tiny green circle that I could no longer enjoy ordinary evenings without checking whether David was "recently active."

At one point, I believe I may have refreshed Match.com more frequently than the Nasdaq updates stock prices.

This is what modern dating does to people.

The apps quietly transform grown adults into emotional wildlife trackers.

And yet somehow, despite the insanity, we continue.

Which brings me to Susan and Jeff.

Susan and Jeff were high school classmates from the Class of '73 who reconnected later in life after Jeff's wife passed away. Susan was glowing with happiness. There were bike rides, romance, physical intimacy after years of loneliness, and the kind of rebirth that makes girlfriends say:

"Oh thank God. Finally."

Then one evening, while absentmindedly scrolling through Match.com, I noticed that Jeff had viewed my profile.

Interesting.

Even more interesting?

The little green light beside his name.

ACTIVE NOW.

Curious, I clicked.

There was Jeff's profile smiling back at me:

"Recently widowed. Looking for a serious relationship. Willing to travel."

Now mind you, according to Susan, this man was deeply in love.

Meanwhile Jeff appeared to be conducting active recruitment operations from his recliner.

And here, my friends, we encounter one of the great ethical dilemmas of modern dating:

Once you've connected intimately with someone...is continued swiping technically cheating?

I mean, technically it isn't.

No vows have been exchanged.

No goats have been sacrificed beneath moonlight.

And yet...why exactly are you still shopping?

That's the question no one wants to ask.

Because deep down, everyone fears the same thing:
that while we're falling in love, someone else is still browsing.

The little green light tells you everything:
who's lonely,
who's hopeful,
who's lying,
and who absolutely should have gone to bed two hours ago.

Now I faced a moral crisis.

Do I tell Susan?

Do I destroy her happiness?

Do I pretend I saw nothing while Jeff remained electronically available to women within a seventy-five mile radius?

In the end, friendship won.

I told her.

Not only was Jeff active on Match.com all day, every day...he was active while sitting in Susan's house.

Susan broke up with him immediately.

Temporarily.

Because mature relationships are complicated.

People forgive.

People rationalize.

People return to the bike trail.

And honestly? Maybe that's not always weakness.

Maybe after a certain age, people simply understand that perfection is no longer the goal.

Companionship is.

Still...somewhere tonight, an emotionally unstable adult is staring at a tiny green light whispering:

"Who the hell is he talking to at 12:14 AM?"



Nancy VanDermark

"Curiosity, a bicycle ride, and bright lipstick
can be acts of optimism."

About the Author

Nancy VanDermark is an American author, speaker, and lifelong student of resilience, storytelling, and the beautifully fragile human condition.

She holds a degree in American Studies and U.S. History from Smith College and completed Stanford University's Certificate Program in Positive Psychology and Well-Being. She has also completed studies through Harvard Law School Online.

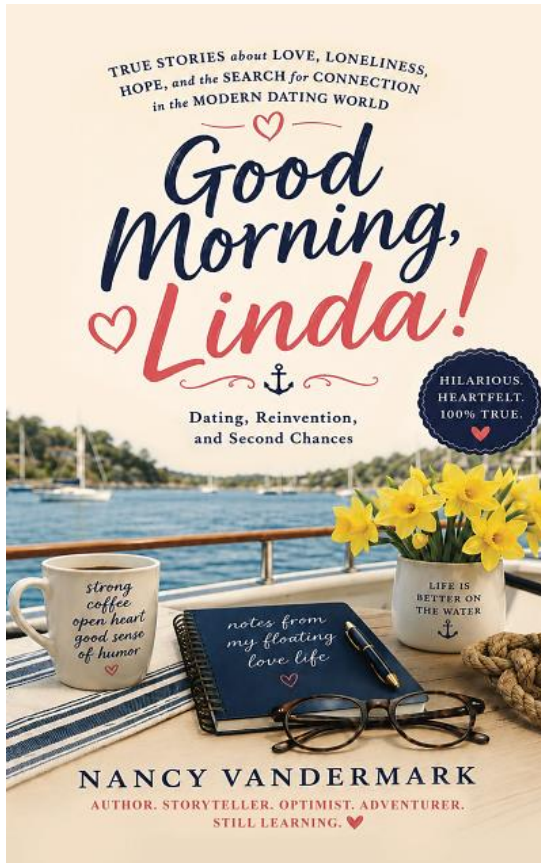
Nancy has appeared on *The Montel Williams Show* and was featured in the Sunday Style section of *The New York Times*.

She is the author of *The Morality of Love* and lives aboard a vintage yacht surrounded by sea breezes, books, bicycles, osprey, herons, and occasionally very confusing men.

After profound personal loss, years of caregiving, and the unexpected emotional chaos of modern dating after sixty-six, Nancy discovered that humor, curiosity, movement, friendship, music, and meaningful human connection remain essential forms of well-being at every age.

When she is not writing, Nancy enjoys salsa dancing, waterfront sunsets, long bike rides, strong coffee, excellent lipstick, and reminding emotionally unstable adults that the

green light means absolutely nothing — and everything at the same time.



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