

# Cupid shoots scammed singles' wallets

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**Monroe** – It was pitched as an “upscale” dating service that guaranteed dates for its love-lorn customers.

But “Selective Singles” turned out to be worse than a bad date for a 34-year-old Monroe man, who shelled out \$1,995 and never heard back from his would-be matchmaker, according to police.

Yesterday, David M. Cum-

mings, a Cornwall man alleged to have been the crooked Cupid, was charged with felony grand larceny. It was a single count for the case involving the Monroe man, although village police say nine complaints about Cummings are being investigated by the Bergen County Consumer Protection office in New Jersey.

The Monroe victim told police that a cold-calling company in Texas contacted him last summer with the pitch for “Selective Services.” He later wound up meeting with Cummings at the

**DAVID M. CUMMINGS TOLD THE MAN HE ALREADY HAD A PERFECT MATCH IN MIND, INVESTIGATORS SAY.**

Monroe Diner, and Cummings claimed to operate the business out of a Newburgh office.

Cummings told the man he already had a perfect match in mind, investigators say. For

days after that meeting he would call the victim, promising that the romance would begin just as soon as he got the check. But once it came on Aug. 18, Cummings became very hard to reach.

No dates materialized. By January, the victim got fed up and called police. A contrite Cummings told investigators he would return the man's money but never did, according to police.

Cummings, 43, was released yesterday after posting \$200

bail. Neither he nor his attorney could be reached for comment.

Police say the other complaints were filed with the Bergen County agency because Cummings claimed to have an office in Ramsey, N.J. The phony dating service described in those reports had a variety of names – “Drinks for Two” was one – and cost varying amounts.

Monroe police urge anyone who might have fallen prey to the same alleged scam to call them at 782-8644.

## A FRIEND INDEED

Liver transplant donor Joe Wharton, left, and recipient Joe Polanis show off their matching scars. Polanis was in the last stages of liver disease when Wharton offered to be a donor.



Times Herald-Record/TARA ENGBERG

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**Port Jervis** – True friends are hard to come by in this world.

Joe Polanis has one. And thanks to that friend, a man he hadn't seen in decades, he also has his life back.

A year ago, Polanis thought his life was done. His liver was nearly gone, and he'd had no luck finding a donor for the transplant he needed to stay alive.

Today, Polanis is celebrating a new life. And his true friend, Joe Wharton, formerly of Port Jervis and now of Largo, Fla., a guy who gave up 60 percent of his own liver to save his buddy, is celebrating with him.

“I'm thankful to God, and I'm thankful to Joe,” Polanis said.

It was just about a year ago that Polanis reunited with the man who would save his life.

Polanis was in the last stages of liver disease, sparked by a case of Hepatitis C he got from a blood transfusion years before.

Doctors said he had maybe a year to live. In reality, Polanis had only a few months. Things looked pretty grim.

That was when he found out who his real friends were.

“All the guys I knew, we'd

# LIVER and let live

OLD FRIENDS MAKE NEW CONNECTION

pound down beers at the bar and hang out,” he said. “But when all this started to happen, where were they? They disappeared.”

Polanis watched helplessly as his health deteriorated, searching desperately for someone willing to lose part of his own liver so that he could live.

The loneliness was tough. Thinking that maybe people didn't care was tougher.

“I would sit there and just hope someone would call, anyone,” he said. “The phone never rang.”

Then fate stepped in. The phone rang. It was Wharton.

Wharton and Polanis hadn't seen each since they graduated

from Port Jervis High School in the 1970s. They both remembered palling around with each other in Port's West End – Polanis an irreverent athlete, Wharton a music buff.

“The neighborhood was a way of life for everyone back then,” Polanis said. “It was like family.”

Wharton had heard about Polanis' plight from another lost friend found on Classmates.com, a Web site that reunites high school pals for a fee.

The two men talked. Wharton knew Polanis was in dire trouble. He made a decision.

“I knew I had to try to save his life,” Wharton said. “I knew he was dying.”

Wharton endured months of tests, tried to calm his family's fears and got lots of support from his employer through the whole process, he said.

In the end, he turned out to be a perfect match – against astronomical odds. The surgery was performed with only weeks to spare. Wharton lost 60 percent of his liver, which has since grown back. Polanis' pint-sized transplant has now grown into a full-sized liver, too.

“It makes you wonder,” Polanis said. “It had to be fate. If Joe didn't come along when he did, and everything didn't fall into place just the way it did, I would have died.”

Polanis will be on anti-rejection drugs for the rest of his life – 13 pills a day, to the tune of \$6,000 a month. He can't smoke or drink, and tries to eat organic foods instead of thick red steaks.

He doesn't care. He's alive. He's loved. And he has a true old friend back for life.

“People I thought were my friends turned out not to be, and people I never imagined would be turned out to be,” Polanis said.

“I don't ever take anything for granted anymore. I appreciate my life more than ever.”

## Cops say boy had knife, gun at school

**Central Valley** – Woodbury police arrested a Monroe-Woodbury High School senior after they discovered he had brought a BB gun and kitchen knife to school.

School officials, acting on a tip, called police shortly before 2 p.m. Thursday and reported that a student might have a weapon on campus, police said.

Police and school administrators found the student, who was detained and searched.

The 18-year-old had a Daisy Powerline BB gun pistol and a Cutco butcher's knife hidden in an inside coat pocket, police said.

The student was charged with fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon, a misdemeanor, and possession of a weapon on school grounds, a violation, police said.

Police refused to release the student's name yesterday.

He was sent to Orange County Jail on \$1,500 bail and is slated to appear in Woodbury Town Court on March 7, police said.

Superintendent Joseph DiLorenzo said the district has an “extremely tough” policy on students bringing weapons to school.

He would not comment on what action had been taken against the student.

Kristina Wells

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