

# Ted Nelson

DATE OF BIRTH: June 17, 1937

PLACE OF BIRTH: Chicago, Illinois

HEIGHT: 6'

WEIGHT: 175

COLOR HAIR: Dark blond

COLOR EYES: Green

OCCUPATION: Maverick Computer Utopian/Writer/Designer/  
Generalist

MAY BE REACHED AT: Box 128, Swarthmore, PA 19081

Ted Nelson is the mad poet of computerdom, the controversial genius behind the equally controversial national computer network system called the Xanadu project. He also has eyes one shade greener than the Mediterranean in midsummer and a spirit that could best be described as that of a tall, highly sexed leprechaun with an IQ of around 180. The following are excerpts from our written and verbal communications with Ted Nelson, in which Ted expresses Ted better than we could ever hope to:

Us: How would you describe yourself to someone who has never met you?

Ted: Look, don't be misled, he comes on very strong, but also like a wifty lightweight, and you'd never know how influential his ideas have been. Most people find him too intense and too quick; there are no conversational preliminaries. The things that are important to him you have probably never heard of, and he may bring them up immediately, mentioning forty peculiar-sounding subjects in five minutes. But keep listening, he's really trying to communicate. Deep down, you may think he's a wacko extraterrestrial, but he really wants to make contact with your species.

Us: What are your immediate and long-term desires in terms of a male/female relationship?

Ted: The world is in a new time. Instant doom watches heavy-lidded and all bets are off. To live life by old standards is silly; the only thing to do is chart whatever wild course your heart seeks, and sail before the wind. I lean toward common-law group marriage, or maybe a harem, like some nouveaux riches I could mention. But a nineteen-eighties harem would have to be nonsexist, and that's a new ball game. I also believe very much in what you might call the Existential Quickie—really touching someone physically, whether or not it involves genital hoohah. I think Ms. Jong called it the Zipless Whatchamacallit. But for this, people have to be exceptionally open, or primed to become so, and few of us are.

Us: How would you like to spend an evening with a woman in whom you were interested?

Ted: Group sex on a first date can be the best or the worst possible way to get to know someone. It certainly zips you past the preliminaries, but it does introduce extraneous problems like stage fright. So probably something more idyllic but equally personal.

Us: Describe your ideal woman.

Ted: I am not afraid of women who are smarter than I. I like to learn from the best. Making love to a brilliant woman makes me feel equal, and equal is enough.

So, my dream woman—let's see. She is English, a countess, a general intellectual, successful novelist, dazzling actress, and good mathematician from an eminent literary-scientific dynasty: I have given her the working name of Esmeralda Huxley. She looks and speaks like Charlotte Rampling and Nastassia Kinski. She is, of course, the perfect age, which is fifteen. But her mother says it's okay: I am uplifting her from a sordid past.

For some reason, I have not yet encountered this woman, though surely she has been searching for me for years. Recently, I have learned that what really matters to me is *warmth*, *wit*, and *enthusiasm*. The rest is negotiable.

Us: How do you wish she would approach you for a first meeting?

Ted: "How I wish she would approach me." Oh, how I do indeed. While I have no trouble getting up before five hundred people and speaking extemporaneously on any subject, I cannot ask a strange woman to dance, and even calling up a woman I don't know involves staring at the wall to work up my courage.

So, I'm easy to approach; there is no red tape. If she wants to talk philosophy, she will murmur "syncretistic eschatology." If she wants to make love to my body for hours while I recite poetry, she will say "plinth." If she wants to be rejected, she will say "tennis."

Us: Plinth.



PSYCHICALLY!

The sentence I wrote was <sup>40</sup>  
"touching someone psychically." Very different.

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Celeste Fremon is a freelance writer specializing in women's interests. She was formerly an editor for *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *Teen* and *Playgirl* magazines. She now lives in Pacific Palisades, California.



A Wallaby Book  
Published by Simon & Schuster  
Distributed by Pocket Books

Cover design by  
George Wever  
1282

0-671-45733-0

\$6.95