

Monday, February 13, 1989

Valentine traditions started as pagan Roman celebration

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

For children, it's a day of mandatory card-giving, giggling and games. For teen-agers, it's a day of flirting, fix-ups and fun. For college students, it's a day of laughter, love and trying to top last year's present.

St. Valentine's Day has been celebrated in many ways all across the world for centuries. It is a day for lovers to be united and friends to be remembered.

Despite the holiday's name, St. Valentine, did not begin these customs.

The most common theory of the origin of Valentine's Day is that St. Valentine, a bishop from Rome, was imprisoned, beaten with clubs and beheaded on Feb. 14 around the year 270.

Valentine was a martyr — he would not give up his religious views. At the time, Romans were killing Christians because of their new religion.

There are two more "romantic" stories about Valentine's imprisonment. One says that he cured the jailer's daughter of blindness and the other says he fell in love with the girl. He supposedly sent her a letter signed "From your Valentine."

St. Valentine is the patron saint of engaged couples and those who want to get married. Even lovers' quarrels are under his guidance.

The true origin for St. Valentine's Day, it is believed, traces back to the Roman Lupercalia, which is a February feast in honor of the god Lupercus.

In one of the games at the feast, young women put their names in a box to be drawn out by the young men. The young woman was then supposed to be the love of the young man for the next year.

When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, they kept the holidays and customs of the people, but adapted them to their new beliefs. The Lupercalia feast was renamed St. Valentine's Day, and the rules of the matchmaking game changed a little.

The names of saints and martyrs replaced the names of hopeful lovers in the box. The name the young people drew was called their

"valentine," and that saint's virtues had to be imitated for the year.

As early as the 14th century, the custom had returned to its original form. The tradition of sending romantic or friendly messages, it is believed, grew from this custom.

Some people believe that poets, such as Chaucer, helped further the romantic aspect of this holiday. In the Middle Ages, many Europeans thought birds mated on Feb. 14.

thought of as the creator of the rhyming love lines enjoyed today on cards. While imprisoned in the Tower of London after the battle of Agincourt in 1415, he sent his wife valentine poems.

Samuel Pepys, a famous diarist, says that in the 17th and 18th century, valentine gifts were common. Rings and jewels often were given as gifts by the rich.

Today, many people give heart-

shaped boxes of candy and flowers. Valentine's Day means big business for card shops and florists.

Barbara Mondile-Hebb, manager at Gateway Hallmark Card Shop in Post Oak Mall, said she considers Valentine's Day as profitable as Christmas.

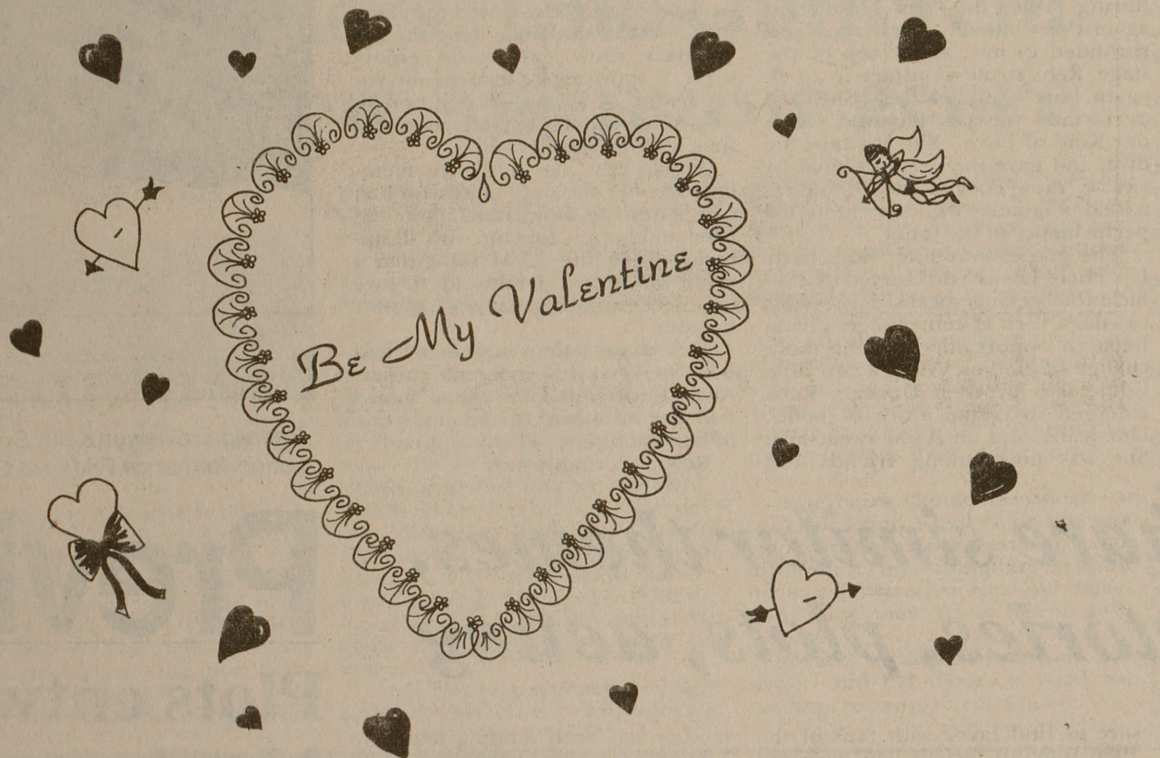
"Valentine's Day is a unique holiday," Mondile-Hebb said. "There is a difference in giving. People will spend 15 to 30 minutes looking at

the cards and then they will buy a little token to show that they care."

Debra Grasso, manager of Summit Stationers in Post Oak Mall, said that the number of people coming to the store for valentines is different than for other holidays.

She said people do not plan for Valentine's Day as they usually do for Christmas.

"People will be standing in lines with a handful of cards," Grasso said. "The average sale is about \$15.



Graphic by Kelly Morgan

Chaucer writes about this mating time, and associates it with love and the pairing up of humans as well.

Valentine's Day was much more serious than a game in the 15th century. Many mothers saw this day as a day full of promising romance and eventual matrimony. Some mothers even wrote letters to gentlemen to tell them of their available daughters.

Charles Duc d' Orleans is often

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People are buying cards, plush animals and the younger kids are buying boxed cards."

At AggieLand Flower and Gift Shoppe, Manager Jimmie Walston said Valentine's Day is one of the shop's biggest holidays.

Walston said she is surprised that the spring flowers are heavily competing with the traditional red roses this year. However, a traditional half-dozen arrangement of roses leads the list of purchases, she said.

Homes tour highlights CS history

Give me a home to call my own
Family and friends to make it a home
Love and kindness that ne'er will depart
Enough to fill a thankful heart.
— from a hanging in the Shellenberger home

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Old homes have a feeling about them that is unmistakable. High ceilings, detailed woodwork and long porches are just some of the features that separate them from today's carbon-copy homes.

A feeling of family history is present in the squeaky wood floors and the old-timey bathtubs.

The Citizens for Historic Preservation's eighth annual Homes Tour gave people an opportunity to visit some of these old homes and take a trip back in time.

CHP President Colleen Batchelor said education is the goal of the tour.

"We encourage people to visualize what the old homes can look like by showing what has been accomplished," Batchelor said. "We want to show people what they can do with an old home."

Tour guides are all volunteers and not paying members of the organization, she said. Combining such "friends" and members, the group has more than 100 supporters.

The four homes on the tour are in College Station.

Built in 1913, the home owned by Bahman and Afsaneh Yazdani, which was moved in 1984 from E. 23rd Street in Bryan to 902 Dexter Drive, blends the old with the new.

Yazdani prefers antiques, but his wife has added contemporary touches to the rooms. The home's decor is influenced by both eastern and western cultures.

Persian shawls and rugs accent the dining room and kitchen. The shawls have been used to drape chairs and as a drape in

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Royal Shakespeare Company bringing bard's works to life

By Cray Pixley

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Theater in Great Britain often is given the distinction of being the finest in the world. If that is true, students at Texas A&M and members of the community will receive a healthy dose of the best this week.

As part of the Alliance for Creative Theatre, Education and Research, five alumni from diverse and renowned British theater companies will present several performances and 35 workshops Monday through Saturday. The visit is part of the Aggie Players' fourth annual "Spring Semester of Shakespeare."

The ACTER's main production will be of William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, in which the five actors will portray all the roles in the tragedy.

"This is the third time that the ACTER troupe has performed at A&M," Dr. Roger Schultz, Director of Theatre Arts, says. "This is the 10th year of the ACTER, and they visit 20 campuses around the country each tour."

In the ACTER's previous productions at A&M, they presented Shakespeare's *Measure For Measure* in 1986 and *The Tempest* in 1987.

The troupe is part of an educational program sponsored by the University of California at Santa Barbara.

"They (University of California), have a number of educational and theatrical endeavors, but ACTER is probably the most well known and the most exciting," Schultz says. "The ACTER performances have been incredibly successful on this campus, and we call early to tell the ACTER office we are interested in a visit."

The company spends about a week at each university performing and conducting workshops. Rice University, the University of Nebraska, the University of Tennessee and Memphis State University are among the campuses the actors will visit this year.

The departments in the College of Liberal Arts, the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley and the Texas

Commission on the Arts are sponsoring the ACTER visit.

Although the members have extensive experience working with Shakespeare's plays, the ACTER performances are not limited to his works.

"In two separate events, one company member will present a 'one-hander', in which the actor will give a one-man show featuring the works of T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets* and another where an actor will present *A Dash Through the Life of Byron*," Schultz says.

Also, a performance will feature portions of the works of English playwright Tom Stoppard.

The actors also will present workshops throughout their stay at A&M.

"The workshops are open to any member of the community, but participation is limited to the class in which they are performed," he says. "They are open with the stipulation that the rooms cannot be overcrowded and that only those students enrolled in the class may participate. The others may observe."

The workshops will cover whatever material fits into the outline of the course, he says.

"Most are during class periods, and for example, one English class workshop will deal with Shakespeare's sonnets, and a modern languages class will deal with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*," Schultz says.

"The way the workshops are conducted will vary from actor to actor," Schultz says.

Information about the time and location of the workshops can be obtained through the Department of Speech Communications and Theater Arts.

All of the ACTER members have worked in the theater, television, film or radio, and have compiled diverse resumes.

Vivien Heilbron trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. She has worked in theater, film, television and radio. Heilbron is the associate director of the ACTER, and this is her third U.S. tour as a member of the company.

Clifford Rose studied literature at London University and performed

repertory theater until he joined the Royal Shakespeare Company. Rose appeared in the television mini-series *War and Remembrance*.

Patti Love trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London and has been a member of the RSC, the National Theatre of Great Britain and the Royal Court Theatre. She also directs plays and appeared in the film *The Long Good Friday*.

Bernard Lloyd trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and has spent seasons with the RSC and the National Theatre.

Geoffrey Church trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London and has been a company member at the RSC and the Royal Court Theatre.

The workshops and some performances of the ACTER repertoire are free. Other performances will have admission charges. A schedule of performances follows:

• Feb. 14, T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets*

Heilbron in Eliot's World War II spiritual meditation reaffirming his American and European "roots." The performance is in Blocker 102 at 8 p.m. Admission is free.

• Feb. 15, At His Lordship's Pleasure — *A Dash Through the Life of Byron*

Lloyd in excerpts from Lord Byron's letters, journals and poetry, including *Don Juan* and *Child Herold*. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. and the performance is at 8 p.m. at the College Station Hilton. Admission is \$25.

• Feb. 16 and 18, *King Lear*

The performances are in Rudder Theater at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the Rudder Box Office. Students and senior citizens seats are \$4.50, and general public seats are \$7.50.

• Feb. 17, *An Evening With Tom Stoppard*

The production includes material from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Jumpers* and *Travesties*. The performance is in Rudder Theater at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$4.50 for A&M students and senior citizens seats and \$7.50 for the general public.

Chocolate has long been the gift of love

By S. Hoechstetter

REVIEWER

It can take almost any form. A rectangle, a mink coat, letters of the alphabet, the Statue of Liberty, liquid, gum, chips, chunks, powder or syrup. "It" is chocolate.

Chocolate. Just reading the word makes some people's mouths water. Some unlucky individuals may break out or gain three pounds at the mere thought of the sweet, smooth substance that costs anywhere from 50 cents for 1.5 ounces to \$40 for one pound.

Valentine's Day is the holiday for giving gifts of flowers and boxes of chocolate.

For centuries chocolate has been thought to have aphrodisiac powers.

Montezuma, ancient Emperor of the Aztecs, would drink "the food of the gods" from a golden goblet before visiting his harem. After drinking the bitter drink made from chocolate beans and sweetened by honey, vanilla and spices, the emperor would throw the goblet into the lake outside his palace.

He may have been the original "chocoholic," because years after his death a large pile of golden goblets was found in the lake.

The Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes conquered Montezuma and returned to Spain with gold and cocoa beans. The Spaniards kept chocolate a secret from the rest of Europe until the 16th century.

Back then, chocolate was only for the wealthy because it was imported from South America and the European governments placed high taxes on the bean.

Chocolate first arrived in America in 1755 and was sold as a drink for various medicinal purposes.

Today, health attitudes toward chocolate have changed as much as the forms in which it is served. But that doesn't seem to have slowed the rate of chocolate consumption in the United States.

Americans eat about ten pounds of chocolate per capita each year, Hershey's Public Information Manager Carl Andrews says.

Valentine's Day is the fourth largest chocolate-selling holiday of the year. The largest selling period is the back-to-school/Halloween season, followed by Christmas and Easter.

Hershey's best-selling product at this time of year is the Hershey's kiss wrapped in festive red and white foil. But they're popular all year long too, Andrews says. At the Hershey's plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania 30 million kisses are made every day.

As chocolate has become more affordable, people have learned more about the food of the gods and have become more health-conscious at the same time.

There are other, more healthy ways to express love at Valentine's Day than by giving chocolate, says Scott & White Health Education Coordinator and registered dietician Sally Scaggs.

"Instead of giving chocolate for Valentine's Day you could give flowers or jewelry — it doesn't disappear like chocolate or die like flowers do," Scaggs says.

"If your loved one is going to give you chocolate, either ask for something else or don't eat it all in one day," she advises.

Scaggs' reasons for limiting chocolate consumption are based on dietary facts. Milk chocolate has some calcium in it, but most of the calories come from fat, she says.

"If you're trying to get 100 percent of the recommended daily allowance of iron, you would have to eat one pound of chocolate covered almonds, which would have about 2,576 calories," she says.

About 70 percent of the calories in chocolate covered almonds comes from fat. U.S. dietary suggestions recommend that no more than 30 percent of the daily calorie allowance should come from fat.

Scaggs does not recommend eating chocolate to get caffeine, either. A chocolate bar can have up to 25 milligrams of caffeine, compared with coffee, which has 100 to 150 milligrams per cup.

She also says that chocolate has no aphrodisiac or addictive qualities.

"It may create pleasant feelings for some people, but it won't give them special romantic powers, she says.

"The food of the gods" is now a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business which may be the secret to its modern-day power.

The Hershey Chocolate Company sold \$2.4 billion worth of chocolate in 1988.

From those figures, it would seem that Americans' hearts still beat for chocolate in any form.



Selections of chocolate and candies line the shelves at Skaggs Alpha Beta in anticipation of Valentine's Day shoppers.

Valentine customs show difference in cultures, change through centuries

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Valentine's Day has been celebrated in many different ways, ranging from the mundane to the bizarre.

Some religious orders still use the old custom of drawing saints' names for their valentines and imitating that saint's holy life for the year.

In England, it was once customary for people to say "Good morning, tis St. Valentine's Day" when greeting people.

The first person to say this expected a present from the person to whom it was said.

In 17th-century France, an equal number of males and females wrote down their names on two pieces of paper and drew names.

This practice created many couples, because each man had a woman as a valentine and each woman had a man as her valentine — so everyone had two valentines.

The men, however, were supposed to stay closer to the women who chose them, not the women they chose.

In some early English colonies, women were superstitious and found various ways to win the love of a man.

If a woman wanted her future spouse to appear to her, she could go to the graveyard on the night before Valentine's Day at midnight.

She then was supposed to sing a chant and run around the church 12 times.

Supposedly, her lover would appear to her the next day.

New York printer John McLoughlin is thought to have made the first comic or "vinegar" valentines in the 1800s.

These valentines depicted "disagreeable old maids" and fat and skinny caricatures.

One read, "Dear Sir, you're so foppish, and scented so fine; I'll not have a man monkey, For my Valentine."