

Tuesday, February 14, 1989



## Valentine's Day was more important in grade school

For those of you not up on current events, today happens to be Valentine's Day. I suspect most of you already know this.

For those who don't, I just have one thing to say: *What rock have you been hiding under?*

Unless you've been marooned on an island in the South Pacific somewhere, you couldn't help but know Valentine's Day has arrived. It's the one day a year when lovers and friends fork out big dollars for those obligatory offerings of undying affection.

If billboard-size advertisements in the newspapers haven't caught your attention, I'm sure the radio and TV ads have.

They've been working on us since Christmas.

Advertisers are masters of the guilt trip. They have me convinced that if I don't get a little something for Aunt Harriett this year she may do something drastic.

It's probably not true, but advertisers would love for me to believe it is.

They insist that verbal expression of affection is not enough. I have to show my love by giving gifts like a new car, a thousand dollar night on the town, or the Crown Jewels.

And it's not just advertisers. The media in general devotes an extraordinary amount of time for Valentine's features and specials. Forget the news — it's Valentine's Day.

I can see two newspaper editors discussing today's news priorities:

"Well Harry, the Russians just obliterated Southern California. Should we run that front page, or the feature on how to make heart-shaped sushi for Valentine's Day?"

"Well Bill, the question is 'What is our responsibility to the public at large?' Should we tell them they won't live to see tomorrow? Or should we show them how to have a memorable Valentine's Day? You know it will be their last..."

"Let's go with the heart-shaped sushi."

Where did we get all these Valentine's Day experts that write these features anyway? How are they qualified to offer advice on what to give, what to do, and how to make the day special?

Do universities offer a curriculum in Valentine's Day Management? Do they offer courses like "Cupid 101" or "Candy Hearts 202"?

I don't think so. I think there's an or-



**Stephanie Stribling**  
Columnist

ganization of people somewhere who do nothing but come up with stupid things for us to do on Valentine's Day... just for jollies.

I don't mean to sound so negative about Valentine's Day. I think expressing affection to people you care about is important.

Some people are just not very consistent in observing this holiday.

A lot of people's interest in Valentine's Day blows hot and cold, depending on the current temperature of their love life. This year may be a little nippy for me...

When one's love life is at a peak, family and friends reap the rewards on Valentine's Day. No one is overlooked, not even the family pet.

But when one's love life is at an ebb, family and friends suffer. No cards, no presents, no nothing. Most people prefer to forget what day it is.

It wasn't always this way. I remember a simpler time. When we were kids Valentine's Day was a celebration, one that both titillated and delighted us.

In grade school, Valentine's Day was an event. An event that some of us spent weeks preparing for.

First, you had to buy the cards. For those of us who came from moderate means, this was not a problem. The cheapest cards were the ones you could pick up at the grocery store for under a buck.

Nothing fancy, mind you — we're not talking Hallmark here. These were cards with puppies, kitties, rabbits, and other assorted double-consonant fuzzies on the front. The reverse simply said "To:" and "From:"

Whether it was the week before or the night before, you raced home with your purchase. All the way home you were mentally compiling a list of which kids deserved which cards.

Here was the difficult part. You had to be strategic in deciding on potential recipients. The wrong card in the wrong hands could be devastating to both the giver and the givee.

First you had to pick the ugliest cards in the bunch. Those were usually the cards with reptiles or other non-fuzzy creatures on the front. The message was never any more committal than "Happy Valentine's Day."

These prize specimens would go to the kids you couldn't stand.

This was the most acceptable way to say "up yours" in the first grade.

And everyone knew if you got a card with a singing toad that said "Happy Valentine's Day," you could pretty much write the sender off your gift list.

Now for the good cards. These were for the people you thought were the "bees-knees" — whether they knew you existed or not.

The good cards were a confirmation of affection for friends and an ice-breaker for would-be friends, particularly those of the opposite sex.

The best card you saved for your six-year-old Mr. or Miss Right. It usually pictured some fuzzy fur ball on the front, with a really daring message like "Be Mine." Pretty bold for a first-grade ego.

Thinking of something to say on this one was a real task. Usually after several hours of tedious composition, you ended up with "I think you're cute," or "Will you be my Valentine?" Some brave souls ventured so far as to say "I love you."

I was never that courageous.

On Valentine's morning you would set out for school with your brown paper sack full of cards and a heart full of anticipation.

If you were lucky, the teacher would have a little party with refreshments for all. I always got those little cupcakes with a candy heart planted on top.

Every single child had a paper bag with their name on it taped along the blackboard at the front of the room. Most of them had primitive little artistic creations tacked on.

At some point during the day everyone would distribute their goodies into the sacks up front.

The rest of the day was a complete wash. You couldn't learn anything because all your mental energy was being focused on that little paper bag at the front of the room.

It contained a confirmation of your being. A validation of who you were.

Your mind would not rest until you tore open the bag (which was always before you got home), and discovered who was just dying to be your Valentine.

If you're like most of us, your six-year-old Mr. or Miss Right was soliciting someone else's affection.

If anyone wanted to be your Valentine, it was the person you least expected. Somebody that you told your parents was "gross."

But in some weird way, you felt loved. I miss the 75-cent Valentine's Day. It's amazing the feelings that can be conveyed on a two-cent card.

No lavish presents — just the gift of sentiment.

*Stephanie Stribling is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.*

## It's not that easy being a single guy

**Randy Lemmon**  
Guest Columnist

Since Valentine's Day is just around the corner, I thought I would provide some learning experiences to those considering to pop "the question" on the holiest of all days associated with romance.

I recently had one of those painful experiences that makes me question my single life. It makes me become introspective about marriage and commitment; it's called a birthday.

The closer a male gets to thirty without being married, the more excruciating the marriage debate becomes. This is happening all too often for me at this time of the year. I consider it a double whammy — an uncomfortable combination of a birthday too close to Valentine's Day.

Some of my family members consider me to be entrenched in a single lifestyle, and they think that I am nowhere close to leaving it for nuptial bliss.

I have some friends who say I just haven't found the "right person." I love that statement. I put it in the same category as all of those other pearls of wisdom that parents usually become so famous for. Phrases like: "Everything happens for a reason; you'll know it when you find her; well, it just wasn't meant to be."

It used to be that men had a problem with commitment and/or marriage. But the sex plagues of the '80s have helped alter that. Marriage and commitment are now the "in" thing to do. (Even if they are caused by fear). Because of AIDS, more married couples are at least finding some common ground toward being happily married.

By most standards it is the woman that puts more into a relationship than the man. And when the commitment doesn't begin to happen after one, two and even three years into the relationship, what once was an investment ultimately becomes a frustration. I don't personally know many men that have fallen into that trap.

Ironically, if someone puts everything they have into a relationship and the other person is not quite ready for it, you will see people flee from the relationship faster than George Smith from his own press conference.

There are so many double standards in today's relationships (or are they double-edged swords?). Single men love the idea that they have limitless access to any number of women. But remember, I said it was just an idea. Call it a play for ammunition when bragging among buddies. If it has to be bragged about, it probably never happened. On the other hand, women can be addicted to the ability to bring any number of men to their knees, through the art of the tease. It becomes something of a game.

We all love the chase. We get bored with repetition. And everybody hates to start over. We all fit in one of those categories when it comes to relationships. I myself have become immune to the fear that so pervades the "starting over" category.

I have had to do it so many times that I consider myself all-conference.

There are probably some budding psychology majors out there frothing at the mouth to psychoanalyze me right now. But there is some background to my thinking. When I left Texas A&M after graduation, my first job was in the

hotbed of Southern Baptist moral philosophy — Waco, Texas.

Being one of the few single males in town (single females knew better than to move to there), one could only date single women among two species: the co-ed from Baylor or the home-baked Wacoan. Dating was not in the vocabulary of too many of these women. Marriage was. Ultimately, the problem with the college girls was financial. It is public knowledge that the Baylor co-ed is definitely looking for Mr. Bigbucks. That pretty much eliminated me.

So it left the girls from Waco — a species that was a true oddity to me. It seemed to be extremely important to Waco-born-and-bred girls to hang on to their high school sweetheart, marry them, have three children and then go to work for one of the local insurance companies. By the way, divorced, single women with children are at an all-time high in Waco. They too are looking for someone to re-marry.

So I took a job back at the Holy Land, and found a new dynamic to my single life. Ever since I have been back in Bryan-College Station I am amazed at how many female students have this overwhelming need to claim a boyfriend.

Said boyfriend can be a real jerk, he can be intensely ugly, he can be the biggest sleaze that walks, he can fool around, or he can smother her to the point of being a prisoner. But at least the female has a boyfriend. I think this stems from a competitive spirit raised in sororities and other social ills.

How does one meet single girls in a community obsessed with having a social partner. They go out of their way to make sure you know that they have a boyfriend. They are just waiting for the right moment in any conversation to interject a "my boyfriend this" or "my boyfriend that." Maybe it just happens to me at inopportune moments.

But in this Age of AIDS this underwhelming phenomenon might also be the direct result of the desire for monogamy. Heaven forbid a female should be thought of as single, and still on the prowl. Unfortunately, most men don't even have to be devotedly single to be on the prowl.

I am just wondering whether society is trying to tell us to be something other than confirmed bachelors. I am actually more frightened by marriage and the domesticity that accompanies it, than I am of AIDS and other sexual diseases. All my friends who have tied the knot since college are now pushing maximum density. Married couples get fat. This is not something I need anymore help at.

Maybe I shouldn't complain about relationships. I am trying not to. I should consider myself lucky. None of my past romances have sent me into therapy — that is usually a positive sign. I think I am now developing a non-pursuit attitude that may be hindering me.

I now believe that if something is to happen with a member of the opposite sex the opposite sex is going to have to initiate the whole thing. That may be a problem since everyone has a boyfriend.

Call it a self-induced celibacy. Unfortunately, I don't think chastity is one of my strong suits.

*Randy Lemmon is a communications specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, a 1984 graduate of Texas A&M University and a guest columnist for The Battalion.*

## Mail Call

Just chill out, man

EDITOR:

Wow! Like Todd Honeycutt is totally spiritual. His uplifted views of revelation from meditation are radically awesome! Yeah, we don't need government or cooperation. Hospitals, medicine, technological advancements? Bah! Who needs them? We should split up the world so everyone gets a couple of acres, and we could separate ourselves from each other and this materialistic, filthy world of greed. 5psychological ineptitude, it's all mental! All we need is inner advancement; our bodies aren't important. Why do we even need our physical senses? We can live on air! Break out the tie-dies and peace signs, Moonbeam. We're back. Guide us to enlightenment, Oh great guru of mentality!

**Terry Leifeste '91**  
Accompanied by seven signatures

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