



Photo by Scott D. Weaver

Jimmie Walston of University Flowers puts the finishing touches on a rose bouquet, one of thousands of flower arrangements that will be sent on Valentine's Day this year.

Florists

(Continued from page 6)

Valentine's Day rush as much as people might think they do, Ash says. Operating costs increase due to increased personnel and supplier mark-ups.

She says that in larger cities such as Houston or Dallas, florist shops increase their prices to make a larger profit, but that similar prices would not be acceptable in this area. She says that if she were to increase her prices by the same percentage that supplies increased, as florists do in some cities, a bouquet of roses would cost \$75.

Occasionally, someone will make an unusual request. For example, Ash cites a man who last year wanted to include a diamond engagement ring in his flower arrangement.

In addition to jewelry, some people want to include champagne or lingerie in their orders, but Ash says that is uncommon. They usually try to fulfill these requests, but in situations involving alcoholic beverages, she says she has to check people's identification.

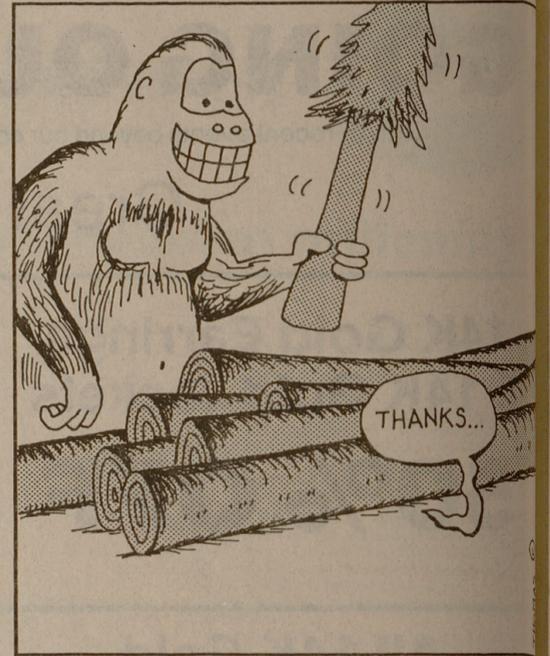
Walston says the most unusual Valentine's request they have had occurred about two years ago. A

man called from Hawaii and ordered a large solid heart of red roses. "It looked like a box of candy," she says.

Deliveries on campus will be more difficult this year, Ash says. Tighter dorm security makes it harder for delivery people to get in, and construction will further increase the problems.

Planning for the Valentine's Day crunch began weeks ago. Ash says flowers were ordered from wholesalers in January to ensure that she would have a sufficient supply. She says that after all of the ordered flowers are sold, she will be unable to get more.

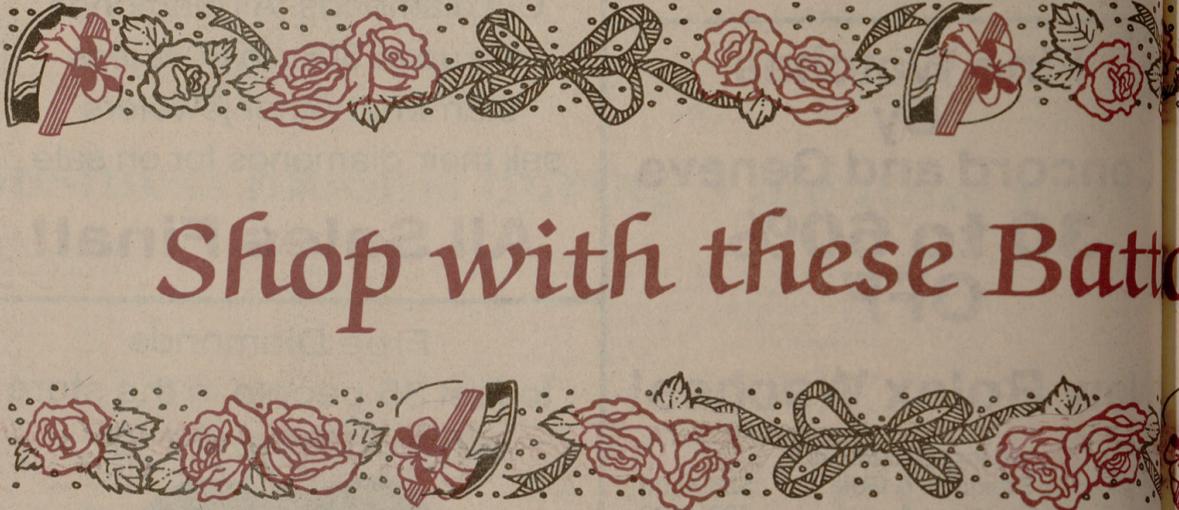
Walston says that despite all the potential problems, she is prepared for this year's rush. She hired extra workers, and has a head start on preparing her arrangements. The only thing that could slow them down, she says, is bad weather.



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Cartoon by Kevin Thayer

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