

Romance and roses, it's all for the money

I hate Valentine's Day. There, I've said it, straight up front. Now we can get on to the story.

Valentine's Day isn't even a real holiday, like Christmas, Thanksgiving or Super Bowl Sunday. It's a creature of the greeting-card companies to rake in revenue. It has good company in that regard — Mother's Day, Father's Day, Earth Day.

It's not that Valentine's Day is geared primarily toward women. Really — what's the usual Valentine's Day routine? A bouquet of roses, a nice candlelight dinner (expensive if possible), a little dancing, perhaps, a moonlit stroll, and some heavy intimacy on a bearskin rug by an open fireplace.

Most men would prefer to skip to the last part right away. As for the rest, I speak for many men who would ditch the dinner and roses and substitute it with a monster truck rally (since football season's over). For gifts, forget the roses, since they die in a few days. Give power tools, because when you need to refinish that floor, or belt sand that cabinet, how much good is a rose going to be?

All that aside, I suppose it's the hokey commercialism, the forced romance of the whole thing I hate the most. Every year, like clockwork, we are supposed to become romantic, as if we aren't the other 364 days. The swallows of San Capistrano should be so regular.

And what do we do? We take out nauseating personals in the DN — the regular personals and the Greek Affairs ads aren't bad enough. We buy flowers from everyone — florists, sororities in the union, Kwik Shops, guys on the street, Hare Krishnas in airports, you name it. Some men, trying to be romantic and seductive, don't even buy real flowers. They buy "panty roses," which are lace panties folded to —

you get the idea.

And, of course, there are the chocolates. Hershey's loves Valentine's Day, and so does Jenny Craig. Stop and think about it for a minute, guys (and girls). Here you are, supposedly celebrating love, telling your mate how much you love her (or him), and how sexy she (or he) is, and what are you giving her (or him)? Something to bulge the waistline, induce guilt and cause zits.

Finding a mate on Valentine's Day is desperate enough — but how about leaving one? For the person you truly cannot stand, who makes you wonder what you ever saw in him or her, whose voice, habits and presence makes you want to throw yourself in front of a speeding bus, Feb. 14 is the perfect time to send a bouquet of black roses. It's one Valentine's Day neither of you will forget. But make sure you get to the bearskin rug before you tell her (or him).

All this is bad enough if you're actually dating someone. For those without "that special someone" on Feb. 14, it is excruciating; all the goey romanticism going on and you can't share in it. Dating services, hoping to match the hopelessly unmatchable, also do a boom business this time of year.

For those who think that this is nothing more than the rantings of one of the lonely, you're wrong. I have a significant other, and we don't need some greeting card company to tell us to be romantic on one day — we are, every day, by our own actions and thoughts. We don't need the hype to know we're in love. It's in our hearts, and not on our sleeves.

Of course, I'll still probably buy her that damned bouquet. Just, of course, to see the way her face lights up when I do.

--Sam Kepfield

Love conquers time

Columnist reunited with birth mom after two decades of separation

Valentine's Day is a time for individuals to reflect on the loved ones in their lives. For me, I reflect on a milestone in my life when I was able to reveal my inner love for a family I had never met.

I was placed for adoption as an infant, and as I grew up, it was difficult for me to understand why this event happened. I felt I didn't have anyone with whom I could identify. That is why meeting my biological family was the one blessing from the Lord I treasure most.

"Hello, hello, may I speak to Yolanda?"

"This is Yolanda speaking."
"This is your mother speaking."
In an instant, both my biological mother and I began to cry.

I was 21 years old when this conversation occurred. My adoptive mother, Mary Avidano, had sent a letter to the social worker who had assisted in my adoption.

The letter included questions about my biological family. After two years, the social worker informed my mother of my biological mother's and grandmother's names. The arrival of this letter caused a lot of excitement within me — the news was overwhelming.

At first I couldn't believe I could possibly be reunited with my relatives. I had thought a lot about my biological mother, and after the birth of my son, Michael, I had developed a need to know my roots. The letter had uncovered feelings of fear as well as happiness in me. What if my birth mother didn't want to meet me?

After receiving the letter, my first effort was to write to my biological grandmother's last known address, which the social worker had given to me. Within weeks the letter was

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