

On Valentine's Day, tried and true gifts are the best

Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

Expressions of affection have sure changed over the years.

The reader board at the local sporting goods store says: "Nothing says you love your valentine like a new gun."

Whatever happened to a box of chocolates? Fancy cards, jewelry or a nice scarf?

I guess it's all relative. If your valentine lives on the edge of a forest and is having problems with a fox getting into her chicken coop and stealing her eggs, then, yeah, maybe she would appreciate a nice shotgun for Valentine's Day.

For others of us, the old-time sentiments would probably be best.

When I was young, sending Valentine's Day cards and writing poetry to the object of your desire was the thing to do. I tried my hand at many poems through the years but also found plagiarism useful.

For instance, there were the lines I wrote to a one-time boyfriend in high school: "Ain't no mountain high enough, ain't no valley low enough, ain't no river wide enough to keep me away from you, babe."

Who knew that Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell would come along and make that lyric famous?

Not everybody has talent for original prose or poetry. I once had an admirer who sent me a Valentine's Day note that read: "I like you. Do you like me? Circle: Yes; No."

At first I was flattered, but after I found out he'd sent the same note to half the girls in my class, I wadded it up and threw it in the wastebasket.

When I was in grade school, we would decorate shoeboxes and line them up on the classroom counter, then distribute Valentine's Day cards to all our classmates.

You could tell if somebody had a special fancy for you if, along with the usual Mickey Mouse cut-out card, there was a little extra present.

One year a boy gave me a big Valentine's Day card he'd bought at the drugstore and a little bag of jewelry.

My girlfriends were all atwitter with the significance of the gesture, but I was not surprised. I knew Gregory was smitten with me when we were playing baseball and I slid into third base, where he was the baseman. And although he could have tagged me out, he didn't.

No words needed to be said. I sensed the karma.

And the jewelry in the box confirmed it.

But when I took the stash home, my mother looked at the jewelry and told me I'd have to give it back. She said if a girl accepted extravagant gifts from a boy, he would expect something in return.

I did not know exactly what she meant by that, but I assumed it was something like Gregory might want to borrow my bicycle.

So the next day I returned the jewelry and explained that my mother wouldn't let me keep it.

Gregory looked relieved. As it turned out, he'd stolen the jewelry from his sister, and when she discovered it missing she threw a fit and demanded he get it back. I'd done him a favor by returning it before he'd had to ask.

He said thanks and then walked away. It was the end of the romance.

For me, it was just the first in a long string of disappointments.

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