

'I love you'

800 million flowery communicators can't be wrong

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What has the power to warm a heart, ease a pain, tickle a funnybone, even start a new tradition?
What is the only item that is always purchased for someone else?
And, what have Darling, Pa., Romance, Ark., Love, Miss., and metropolitan Detroit got in common?
The answer, of course, is valentines. Eight hundred million of the flowery communicators of undying love and affection are circulating through post offices, classrooms and from hand-to-hand this week.

Even the hostage situation in Iran, inflation, and the threat of reinstitution of the draft have failed to diminish the national mania for telling each other thoughts of love, say-area merchants and card shop owners.
If anything, said Hallmark's Nora Schroeder, Americans are showing more interest than ever in traditional messengers. The ones, she said, that tell someone you really like him in simple, sincere words.
Greeting cards aren't the only valentine-related messages that sold like hot cakes last week. Somerset Mall's prestigious Mark Cross shop sold out its complete line of status symbol coin purses to the trendy set. Equipped with gold foil covered chocolate coins the

purses sold for \$35 apiece. Complete with one-ounce bars of gold their price tags fluctuated from one day to the next.
Down the mall, Chocolatissimo did a brisk business with a Godiva chocolate package. A two-pound box of the delectable, addictive confection, plus ribbon and rose, cost \$25.25.
Over in Livonia, a firm called Something Special geared up during the late week to begin delivering dozens of packages, each one containing an eight-ounce box of Godiva chocolates, a fifth of Great Western champagne, and a fresh red rose, to loved ones. All of this was available, a Something Special spokesperson said, for a mere \$24.50.

LESS well-heeled romantics also

dreamed up imaginative ways to say "I love you" this week. Numerous couples will sit down tonight to a candlelit supper even if the menu is hamburgers topped with cheese hearts courtesy of a handy cookie cutter. Other sentimentalists planned to venture into the pre-dawn cold to tie the colorful red balloons to the aerials or bumpers of a loved one's car.

But, said Ms. Schroeder, most Americans still rely on the greeting card. Of the 800 million cards sent this year, 600 million will be sent by children.

"The majority of valentines are sent by children under 10 years old," she said.
"Even pets receive their share of cards," she added with a chuckle. "Strange as it may seem, statistics show that a dog is twice as likely to get a valentine as a boss."

Another amusing statistic, she said, is that 80 percent of the humorous cards were purchased by women.

"For some reason women seem to be secure in zapping their loved ones," she said with another chuckle.

Traditionally, she said, greeting card manufacturers cater to women, because 85 percent of the year's sales are made to women. However, St. Valentine's Day and Mother's Day (May 11) are particularly popular with men. By the millions, men lined up last week to buy cards that range from the elegantly traditional to glossy sophisticated cards influenced by a current craze for lacquerware.

ACCORDING to Ms. Schroeder, card givers this year are more sentimental than they have been in many years. A big seller this season is Hallmark's new antique card. To meet the demand the company released three designs from its vast, priceless archives of antique cards and will issue three more next year. Each one has been updated with new, less flowery, but equally romantic sayings, she said.

Another big seller, she said, is the gag card, selected from 100 gag valentines that Hallmark made available this year. Her own favorites are juvenile cards, the dozens of inexpensive paper cards that children frequently exchange in the classroom.

"Children are very big on the knock-knock cards this year," she said. "One says 'Knock-knock. Who's there?' 'Diesel. Diesel who?' 'Diesel make you laugh on Valentine's Day.'"

Ms. Schroeder, a Livonia resident who travels all over metropolitan Detroit and the nation for Hallmark, said the greeting card business is an emotional one. "As many as 3,000 people go through up to 200 separate steps to conceive a single Hallmark valentine," she said.

All this takes time, she added. The preparation of one card may take as much as 18 months. And the results, she said, will probably cost as little as 15 cents or as much as \$5.

"They are already working on the future," she added. "In December they began working on Mother's Day 1981."

Ms. Schroeder believes that there is no reason for anyone to feel that he lacks the imagination to be a resourceful valentine giver.

"In the old days," she said, "people went to valentine writers who wrote up expressions for them. There were appropriate expressions for the butcher, or a fishmonger, or a gentleman to send. And there were responses for women to send in return."

Today, inspiration is available through a newly inaugurated service titled Hallmark Expressions, a gift-giving and party planning suggestion service.

"Even though you're not a kid," she said, "you could buy juvenile valentines and put them in odd places where your valentine is sure to find them — under a dinner napkin, on a chair, in a coat pocket or in a lunch bag." She suggests doing the same with little heart-shaped candies that bear messages.

Ms. Schroeder, who works for Carl Byoir Associates in the Renaissance Center, has dozens of other imaginative suggestions for the would-be St. Valentine's Day observer.

"It doesn't have to be an expensive valentine," she said. "In fact, cookies from your kitchen dressed up for delivery in a valentine gift box would be a great gift."



The valentine of the late 19th century was popularly exchanged from hand-to-hand because postal delivery was charged the recipient rather than the sender. This fold-over model was a favorite with young children.



Sense of humor so often associated with children's valentines was evident even in the Buster Brown card dating from the late 19th century.



In 1847 Esther Howland created her first lacy valentine with help from her friends and family. The rebirth of interest in traditional sentiment stirred Hallmark to reissue cards, right, whose designs are reminiscent of those in its priceless collection of antique cards like those above.



The German mechanical valentine from the late 1880s was an elegant confection of hand-cut open work, cutout flowers and flowery sentiment. It folded out like an accordion.

