

# For love or money?

**CON:** 'Special' days need to be about more than just finding an excuse for having expensive sex

Today, Feb. 14, is a special day on my calendar: A day of personal and historical significance. Feb. 14 is Oregon's birthday. Last year, in celebration of our pine tree and grass-filled state, I even dyed my hair green.

Some people were confused. Apparently, they have another association with today: Valentine's Day, and Valentine's Day has nothing to do with the color green.

Unless, of course, you associate green with money. Yes, corporate America has purchased this holiday along with the rest, and florists, card makers and dimly lit restaurants are reaping the rewards.

However, it isn't the big money buyout that bothers me about Valentine's Day. In today's society, this is to be expected. I don't like Valentine's Day because it has no point.

One of my friends tells me that, for her family, Valentine's Day is a big deal; a time when everyone gets together with much joy and happiness. Well, my friend is weird.

Let's face it, Valentine's Day is about sex. This isn't a productive holiday which builds a sense of community. It's a holiday when people spend a lot of money to get what they usually obtain for free.

Perhaps in earlier, more proper days, sex was a "big event." Something that necessitated giving flowers, buying expensive meals and handing over a fat box of chocolates. Something that required its own day of

the year.

For most modern couples, though, sex is almost painfully routine. It is certainly not an event that requires the sacrifice of innocent flowers.

Yes, sex is something that should be taken seriously, but so are flowers. My mother grew roses, for example, and her careful attention to the pruning and spraying that the task requires has proven to me the near-sacredness of the rose. In the name of one more night of sex, we're sacrificing thousands of roses before they cease to be buds.

I may exaggerate the situation. Perhaps you don't think the fate of a few flowers is worth trimming a holiday. This could be true, but if Valentine's Day is to continue, it should serve a more useful purpose than preparing a couple for their night's frivolity by forcing a man to whip out his wallet for something other than a condom. (Yes, I know you shouldn't keep them there.)

Valentine's Day is supposed to be about love, but the only thing it teaches is that true love exists within the confines of coupledom and requires large purchases of perfume, candy, flowers and jewelry to ensure its continuation.

Advertisers tell us, in diamond commercials and flower spots, that by buying the right product, we can guarantee romance at least one day of the year. This romance is just one more step on the road to sex. And as they say, sex sells.

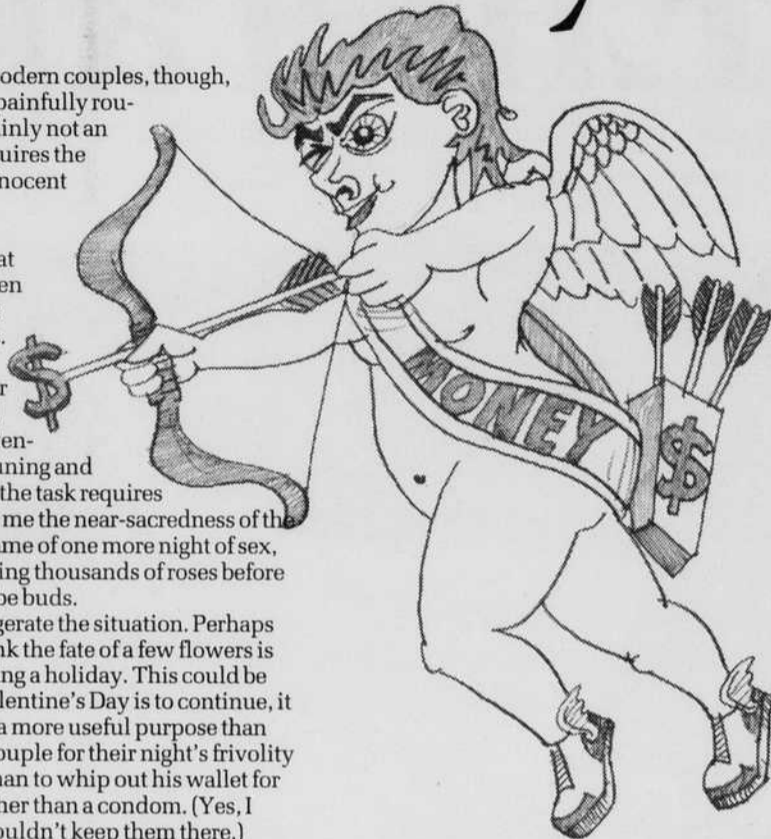
This kind of sexually charged, incredibly

was planning the ultimate lonely hearts club night with a bunch of single girlfriends. I started preparing for it two weeks before V-Day. I searched the yellow pages for the most unromantic sounding restaurant in which we could chow on meat and be your basic bitter Harpies.

No matter. It never happened. I got a date. How typical! Abandon your sex for the love of the opposite, there's no better way to spend the holiday. He was someone I had been eying for a while and we'd been doing the I-like-you-do-you-like-me tango for the two previous weeks.

There were so many things wrong with this man. First of all, we worked together, something I've always thought a no-no. Secondly, he had this hideous leech of an ex-girlfriend who I had a feeling would never die. We went to the Bijou to see "Red," the French film which is part of the triage. It was actually quite romantic in an intellectual way. Afterward we went and had some beers and he walked me home. Okay, this is what you are waiting for, he kissed me on the verandah! Those first kisses. WOW! They are either there or they are not. This one was definitely there and I've been in love with him ever since.

It's sad though. There's really not enough romance in the world these days. My grandparents are coming up on their 60th wedding anniversary. They became sweethearts in the



expensive love is not what society needs to encourage. What we could use is a little love of community. A little love of family. A little love that doesn't involve buying presents.

Or perhaps what we really need to do is dye our hair green, run naked in the woods and dread the day when Hallmark issues a card for Oregon's birthday.

*Mike Schmierbach, a junior majoring in journalism, is a guest columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the paper.*

fourth grade and went steady all through high school.

Last year their local newspaper had a contest for the most romantic true-life love story. My grandfather wrote in and won first place. He didn't even tell my grandmother that he was going to do it. She found it in the paper on Valentine's Day.

Even romantic thought seems to have been squelched in this hurry-up technology intensive culture of the Nineties. Ruth Bascom, former mayor, proposed that all the street lamps and city lights be modified so that Eugeni-ans could better enjoy the beautiful Northwest night sky. What a romantic idea. Some locals scoffed at this as frivolous. But, why not?

I think that is the idea behind Valentine's Day. It's a holiday when we have an excuse to be silly in love. Some cool poet once said, "For in the muck and scum of things, there always, always, something sings."

That's what the holiday is about. Taking pause to remember that the good life is not about wealth or stature, it's about the priceless things.

So, don't wallow in the muck on this holiday. Ask someone out, send flowers anonymously, rent a sappy movie and drink a lot of wine. If it's clear, go stare at the cosmos, although you'll have to drive out of town or up into the hills. Eugene isn't nearly as romantic as the mayor.

*Amanda Erickson, a senior majoring in journalism, is a guest columnist for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the paper.*



**OPINION**  
**Mike Schmierbach**



**OPINION**  
**Amanda Erickson**



## LETTERS

### Men against rape

The Just Us program on Jan. 15 was a powerful, thought-provoking presentation on acquaintance rape that spoke to the hearts of more than 600 attendees. Men on campus now have the opportunity to come together to learn what we can do to prevent date rape.

Three thoughts have emerged. We desperately need to lend leadership and support in reinstating and maintaining organizations on campus such as Greeks Against Rape and Men Against Rape.

It is imperative that all men become aware of how our socialization process, internalized beliefs and external behavior may contribute to a rape-tolerant environment.

Last of all, it would be important for male faculty and staff to reflect on how they could become positive role models to students on campus in regards to relationships.

The University Counseling Center will be offering workshops for men that will provide an opportunity to explore our socialization, behaviors and beliefs in a positive and safe atmosphere.

The ultimate goal is to develop naturally appropriate ways of relating with others in order to prevent unwanted sexual behavior. For further information, contact the Counseling Center at 346-3227.

**John Davies, Ph.D.**  
& 2 co-signers  
University Counseling Center

### Get with it

A quick reminder to all coffee drinkers and cigarette smokers: It is 1997, and some of you don't get it. No, I don't harsh on either of these habits whatsoever, but I do have some strong feelings toward habits within these habits.

First, to all you coffee, tea or any convenience beverage drinkers: Wake up and smell the coffee! The continuous purchasing a disposable paper drink cup, accompanied by those handy dandy plastic lids day after day isn't right. It is very easy to spend \$3 on a refillable mug that you can carry in your back pack.

The waste and continuous throw-away habits can't be sustained. Do yourself and the earth a favor. It will make you feel good, I promise.

Secondly, to all you cancer puffers: Smoke if you do choose, but don't throw you lipstick covered, fiberglass filled, nicotine spiked roaches on the ground. Who made the rule that cigarette butts weren't trash? I don't like to look at your deathly remains still smoldering on the side walk. It's easy to put a cigarette out and dispose of it properly.

If you fall under one or both of these categories, just think about your actions, how they affect others and the place we reside. Thank you for reading and absorbing.

**Josh Laughlin**  
Journalism

## Corrections

In the Feb. 12 article, "BSU recognizes Black History," the sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha was incorrectly named Alpha Kappa. The Alpha Kappa Alpha fashion show will be from 3 to 5 p.m. in the Memorial Union Ballroom in Corvallis.

In the Feb. 12 article, "Black History Month Events Continue," the Black Student Union was incorrectly named as sponsoring the Ebony Man Showcase. The Black Women of Empowerment will be sponsoring the event, which will take place at noon on Feb. 22 in the EMU Gumwood Room.

The Emerald regrets the errors.