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"SON, REMEMBER HOW I USED TO SAY 'THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR VICTORY' . . . ?"

BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

In my opinion

V-Day Diary

Taking a page from genius essayist David Sedaris, I present a diary of the time prior to Valentine's Day:

I really should avoid a cliché column full of cynicism about Valentine's Day. It's just that that stupid cupid is staring back at me every way I turn. In the words of a dear roommate: The public is so focused on keeping guns away from children, and yet here we are promoting an icon of a baby packing heat.

Today I saw a three-pack of Valentine's Day thongs at American Eagle Outfitters. Why do you need three separate thongs in one night? And don't give me that crap about wearing them year-round. The sales girl is no help. I was about to ask her opinion of Valentine's Day, but I held off, as she was already on the phone with security after my interrogation involving intimate apparel.

Apparently, there is something called "Sweetest Day," because one day to express romantic love is not enough. Now we need a "Valentine's Day: Part Two" in October. You'd think people in relationships were just sitting around, twiddling their thumbs and nervously waiting for the next national greeting-card holiday to roll around so they can lean over and give each other a kiss.

Here's the single male perspective: apathetic. This particular male friend



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

of mine doesn't care a smidgen that the big V is fast approaching. Then again, he also doesn't care about consuming pizza that has remained unrefrigerated overnight. He'll be spending his Feb. 14 in an enclosed space for three hours with his two most recent crushes.

Do you remember that movie "The Truman Show"? I swear, I swear, my life is just a set-up for a reality TV show. What else can explain the sudden surge of ex-boyfriend sightings in the week leading up to Valentine's Day? Some sadistic bastard is apparently executive director of my life.

I tried to research the history of Valentine's Day. It proved an arduous task, as there is apparently no consensus on any plausible reason why it even exists. Was Valentine a prisoner in love with the jailer's daughter? A priest who married lovers in secret? Groundhog Day: There's a worthwhile holiday with a simple history.

How about we just re-christen

Valentine's Day: "I'm Single So Let's Get High Day."

Last week, the Vermont Teddy Bear Company introduced the Crazy For You Bear. It's a teddy in a straitjacket. If Valentine's Day has come to the point where stuffed animals are manufactured to look like mental patients, perhaps there is a larger point we should be looking at here. Also, why stop at a straitjacket? I'm personally holding out for Electroshock Therapy Bear. His eyes don't just light up because of the electricity passing through his brain; they light up because he loves you!

My taken friend swears that Valentine's Day is actually worse for people in relationships than for singles. She says expecting everything the media promise and getting an "Oh shit, it's what day?" is worse than singledom. I'd say that at least in that situation, there's a flesh-and-blood companion there with you. Sure, you might spend the night standing around a local Skate World and slapping your flesh-and-blood companion in the face, but at least there's somebody there feeling your frustrated fist.

My analysis is falling on an empty room. My friend has moved onto the couch and is engaging in some significant necking.

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INBOX

Nothing's conservative for regressive Republicans

In modern political parlance, the term "progressive" is heir-apparent to the term "liberal." This is a result of the word "liberal" having been so badly crucified by Republicans as to be beyond resurrection in our lifetimes.

My fellow Democrats, let's turn the tables. There is nothing "conservative" about launching wars of choice on little more than a hunch and a grudge. There is nothing "conservative" about

running record federal deficits and burdening our children with what amounts to a birth tax. There is nothing "conservative" about a largely Republican corporate culture that is polluting our earth and the minds of our children while paying little taxes and sending our jobs overseas. There is nothing "conservative" about selling out our future in hopes that God will someday sort things out.

Let's start calling it like it is. More and more, Republicans are not "conservative," they are "regressive." The true "conservatives," honest and

civil and fiscally responsible, have been marginalized within a party of regressives who control our government and want our nation to regress to the days when we didn't take care of our elderly, when abortions were done in the back alley and when social justice was the dream of a black reverend.

So with every political conversation, with every letter to the editor, with every sign at a protest, say it like it is: "regressives."

Todd Huffman
Eugene

Editorial

Gov. Dean perfect for Democratic leadership

Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean is the next leader of the Democratic National Committee, replacing the insipid Terry McAuliffe. Dean's dramatic fall from grace and rocket-like rise to the most senior position in the Democratic Party is a testament to the power of his message and the desperation within the party for someone who can inspire its base.

Dean, the man who coined the phrase "Wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time," was a controversial choice to say the least. The other two Democratic leaders, House Minority Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, were backing conservative Democrat Tim Roemer for the DNC gig. Roemer is an anti-abortion defense hawk who believes Democrats lost the election due to opposition to the war in Iraq. Both Reid and Pelosi have been pushing for the Democratic Party to move further right, especially on defensive and so-called "values issues," as a way of staying competitive in the so-called "American heartland."

Dean represents a vastly different agenda. He stands for liberals' hope that the Democrats will one day be as bold and courageous of an opposition party as the Republicans were during the Clinton years. He represents the hope that Democrats can reach out to this deeply religious electorate without coming out against gay marriage and abortion, and we appreciate his solidification this weekend of the party's stances on these traditionally tough issues:

On abortion:

"We are the party in favor of allowing women to make up their own minds about their health care."

And on gay marriage:

"We are the party that has always believed in equal rights under the law for all people."

It's about time this party has a leader who will openly take a stand and let the United States know it's ready to put up a fight.

Dean said this weekend that he is ready to dive into the most Republican regions of the country, in which the "red" states greatly outnumber the "blue."

"I'll pretty much be living in red states in the South and West for quite a while," Dean told reporters. "The way to get people not to be skeptical about you is to show up and say what you think."

This might scare some liberals who remember the Iowa caucus "scream heard 'round the world," during his presidential campaign in January. But Dean is not as extreme left as some pundits have painted him to be. He is fiscally conservative, and he has attacked the current administration for its reckless spending. Dean's clear, powerful public speaking is also a welcome change from the bumbling incoherence of President Bush, the longwinded ambiguity of ex-presidential candidate John Kerry, the senile pointless yarns of Reid and the pissed-off soccer-mom lectures of Pelosi.

When he was a presidential front-runner, Dean proved he could effectively raise money through grassroots organizing and, most importantly, inspire disillusioned young voters to get excited about the Democratic Party. The donkeys need that leadership now more than ever. With Dean at the helm of the DNC, battle lines have been drawn in the fight for the soul of the Democratic Party. We hope he wins.