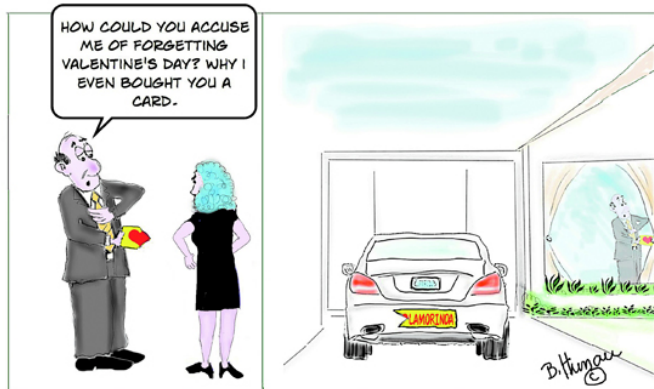


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Where's the Love, Lamorinda?

By Nick Marnell



It was an easy assignment: Find out how Lamorinda feels about Valentine's Day. After all, who doesn't like Valentine's Day? As I found out, at least on my excursion to local cafés, candy shops and drug store greeting card aisles last week, not too many.

Charlie, a patron at Geppeto's Caffe in Orinda, was the first to comment. "It's too commercial," said the 70-year-old retiree from Lafayette. "And it's geared more toward the younger set. Businesses are taking too much advantage of us."

As soon as Jenny, 46, stopped texting, I hustled to her table. "Too cliché," she said, as she awaited her lunch. "Valentine's Day is about the kids. It isn't so much about my husband." Ouch.

Steve, a late-50s Moragan, said that the day had no special meaning to him or his girlfriend, "other than the fact that our first date was on Valentine's Day." Heavens.

What more meaning than that can it possibly have? And when Shawn, an Orinda mom on her way to do food shopping, brushed me off with, "We're going to the Cal-UCLA basketball game that night," it was time to change

tactics.

Where better than the greeting card display at a drug store to find a real Valentine's fan, right? Except Tenaya's first word in response to my question blew up that theory. "Honestly?" she asked. "It's a Hallmark holiday. It's superficial. I don't like it when they're telling you that you have to celebrate. I'm just looking [at valentines] for my kids."

I walked away in despair from the 20-something Lafayette mom.

The candy store! Surely there'd be a romantic, ordering a special treat for Valentine's Day, wouldn't there? Laura, 40s, an Orinda IT manager, set that straight. "I avoid it because of the hype," she said. "You can show affection in other ways. I'm jaded. And my brother even owns a flower shop!"

Just as I was about to beg off of this depressing story, Rebecca appeared, as she shopped along Mt. Diablo Boulevard. "Oh, I love Valentine's Day," she said. Flashing the biggest smile and brightest eyes of the day, the 50-ish vice president of a garden club continued: "I go out in my backyard and cut wreaths from my olive trees. I bring out all of the Valentine's cards that I've received since I was a little girl, and place them around the house. My friends and I will have a tea that day, and we'll talk about famous lover couples. And then my husband and I are going to dinner and then spend the night at the Lafayette Park Hotel."

Finally! There's the love, Lamorinda. Rebecca, you are an inspiration to us all.

Happy Valentines' Day everybody!

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