Out of Bounds

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

candy hearts

s a several-times burned, petulant and overly cynical 18-year-old, I came up with a theory about Valentine's

Day. The holiday was nothing but a dark cabal by the chocolate, flower and greeting card industries to boost sales in a normally weak retail season, I insisted. Not only that, the holiday was bogus on its face, allowing boyfriends who were first-class buffoons all year to shamelessly atone for their jerkiness with a box of Brach's, some mawkishness from Hallmark and rows of roses.

Unfortunately, this harangue went on for almost another nine years, and it didn't do me much good if I happened to have a lady friend. It takes a big man to admit he's wrong, and a bigger one to not curse Cupid when he's hit you smack in the head with the arrows of love. I got hit hard.

So, when you know you're lovestruck, there's but two things to do: first, embrace it; two, get your better half some Sweethearts Conversation Hearts. It's a tradition that dates back to St. Valentine himself.

One story claims that Valentine was a priest in third-century Rome who agreed to marry several Roman couples in secret, in defiance of a rule banning the practice by Emperor Claudius. The tyrant discovered Valentine's actions and threw him in the clink. In jail, Valentine met a young blind woman, the daughTHE SWEET CONFECTIONS WITH THE SAPPY SAYINGS ARE NOW A

PART OF THE VALENTINE'S DAY TRADITION BY MARK LUCE



ter of his jailer. They fell in love, and while he was on his way to execution, legend has it that he wrote her a note that ended, "From Your Valentine."

OK, so it wasn't a candy heart, but it was the message sent to a loved one that inspired the establishment of a day in his honor. Our culture just made it our own by transcribing these love notes onto candy hearts because nothing says Valentine's Day better than satisfying a sweetie's sweet tooth.

One learns (often the hard way) that if there is a day to be dorky about your dearest, Feb. 14 is it. And there has never been a better way to revel in silly, lovey-dovey sayings than Necco's classic chalky candy — Sweethearts Conversation Hearts.

Now DIG ME, the idea for printing sayings on candy hearts originated back

in 1866, when Dan Chase, brother of Necco founder Oliver Chase, used colored paper to put sayings on candy, deeming them "Motto Hearts." It's TRES CHIC to know that each year the Necco Co. produces nearly 8 billion conversation hearts, which if kissed together cheek to cheek would span from Los Angeles to New York and back. To cap it off, all of those hearts, made from late February to the following January, sell out in but six weeks.

The company offers the traditional smaller hearts, that carry 10 new greetings each year, and the larger hearts with longer messages. All of the hearts, in the trademark white and red, have an unmistakable sound when you shake them.

But if you really want to shake things up, did you know that you could actually have a slew of hearts printed with your own flirty (but not filthy) sayings? There's a small catch, of course. If you want your own words on the hearts, you must buy an entire production run of 3,500 pounds. For the record, that's about 1.6 million different ways to say "KISS ME."

Mark Luce, a freelance writer based in Lawrence, Kan., really digs his wife Jennifer.

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