

Valentine

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Stars and Sun Date 34

Valentine Day arrives a few days before my birthday. Our family tended to never celebrate it because of that.

But that was not the case in grade school. Over the years, the Nuns observed Valentine's Day when it preceded Lent. In times before our class first met, some children were given expensive missives to give to those they liked at school. The Nuns observed that too many youngsters in the eight grades were neglected. So before my arrival in the first grade in 1927, it became customary for the good St Joseph's Sisters to make many Valentine Cards with simple wishes; enough for every child to have a valentine to give to every other classmate. None neglected. We were asked to take them home, show them to family. Talk about removing sentiment from that celebration.



Another young negative. The New England Confectionary Company (NECCO) had began making sugar candies in the Boston area in 1901. With great national success. For Valentine day their product was small, heart shaped, varied in color, imprinted with two words, suggesting sweetness between boys a girls. Quite the formula! Inexpensive, small, sweet, a sure winner. When consumed in a small quantity. Overindulging, the whole mouth could become a cancer sore. Somehow, in youth, that was my fate. So long before any of the saccharine imprint message became useful, I had switched to a modest doses of chocolate.



Returning to the initial paragraph, my birthday is three days before The Saints Feast Day. And it has developed in recent years, that our family would come to celebrate a birthday for eleven of the immediate family within a reasonable reach of February fourteenth. Because of that immoderation, we do not celebrate anyone's February birthday directly. Instead have one large bro-haw-haw, which we designate **Tacky Party Day**, a movable feast, where relatives and fiend gather someplace equally tacky, usually a Bowling Alley, dress extremely casual. And for most, once-a-year, bowl two games, then feast on Sloppy Jo sandwiches, macaroni and cheese, beer; brag, tell another "You look marvelous".

Our Guardian Angels, the Nuns who taught, are sure to smile with us on this day, of simplicity, imagination, absurdity, laughter, exercise, family. And, as this is a Saturday by tradition, neither school nor employment for most. It has yet to coincide with Valentine Day, and it won't this year either.