

# LIFESTYLES

Please buy me some flowers!!

Ask Gwendolyn Baines



Dear Gwendolyn: It's that time of year again. The time when all the ladies in the office will receive roses. I don't know about myself. You see, for the past eight years of my marriage, I have never received roses. My husband forgets Valentine's Day, my birthday, and our anniversary. I only receive a gift at Christmas. It is usually a cheap item for the house. Never flowers, perfume, or something just for me.

I love my husband, but I do need for him to show more affection. If giving a gift was against his religious belief, I could accept it. It's not.

This year I am thinking of having some roses delivered so I can fit in. Last year I was the only lady in the office who did not receive roses. I was so hurt and upset I went into a vacant office and cried. I told myself for years he might surprise me, but it hasn't happened yet. Do you think I am wrong for wanting to buy them myself? Valentine's Day is such a wonderful celebration. For me, it's always sad.

Jean

Dear Jean:

Stop being sad. You are only human and expressing a normal behavior. This observance only comes once a year. You are not alone and don't feel you are. Don't sit and ask yourself what's wrong with you. It's your husband who has the problem with understanding how you feel about gifts at special times of the year.

You are not wrong for wanting flowers, but perhaps you should rethink your reasons. Don't order roses just to "fit in." Remember, your co-workers are people just like you. Their life is not happy everyday. It seems that way because all you see are the roses.

Don't wait for him to send you anything! He may take notice if he sees that you don't care. Focus instead on the nice things he does for you. Sit down with him and explain your reasons for wanting flowers.

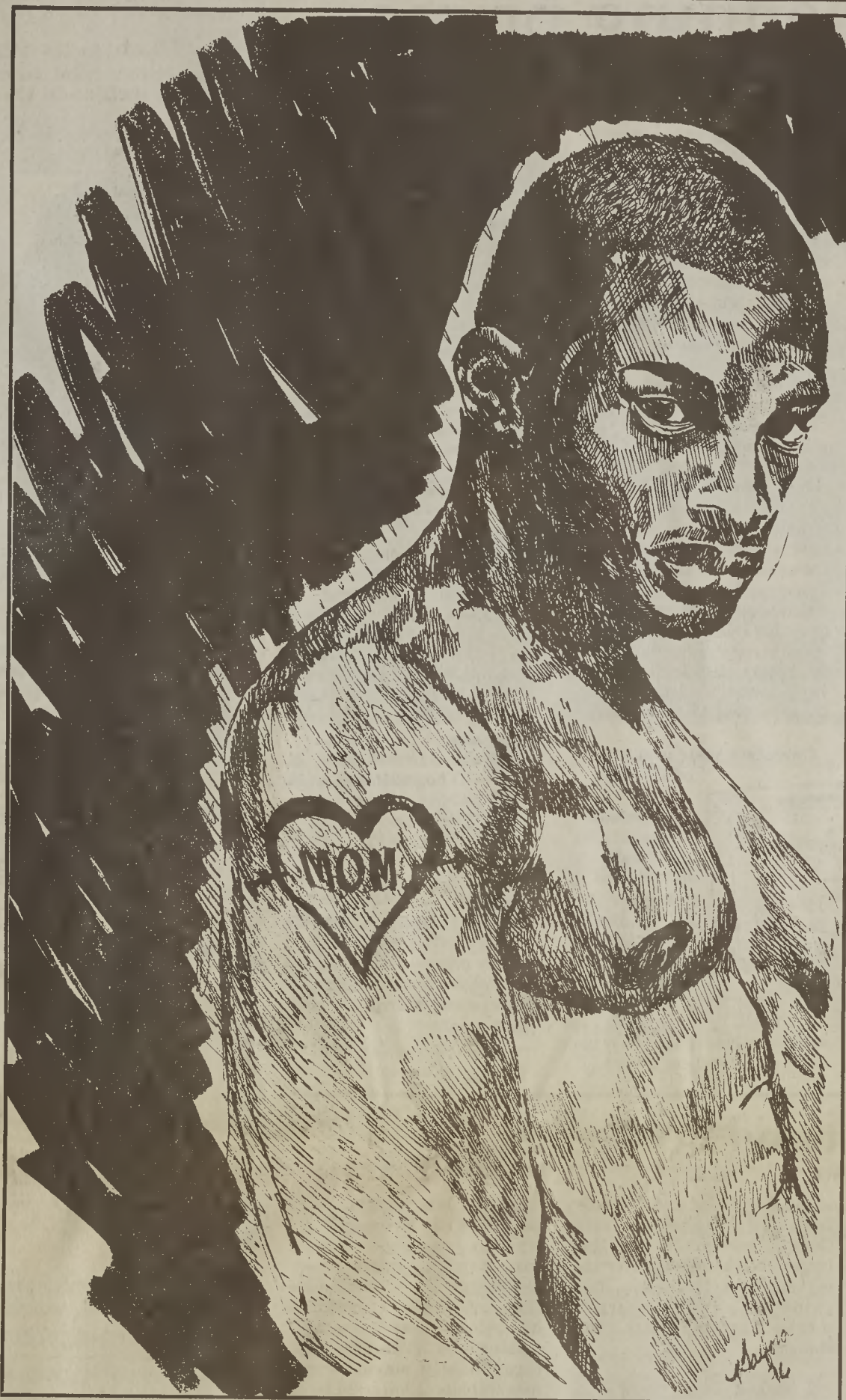
Men often view things differently than women. During your conversation, start with the positive and then move on to the flower issue. Remember to be positive and upbeat. And express how you feel in language that he can understand.

Jean, remember, there is no shame in buying yourself roses. A gift to you on a special day makes it that much more memorable. Daily self-affirmations are necessary and unfortunately women do not use them enough. Go ahead. Make your day. Give yourself a rose!

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ILLUSTRATION/ JOETTA I. TALFORD

# Tattooed FOREVER

Cleanliness is key to lasting, healthy skin design

By Andrea R. Richards  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

**K**enneth Mitchell got his first tattoo - a skull and crossbones - about 18 months ago. He said the procedure hurt a little bit, but not enough to keep him from doing it again. Today, Mitchell, 22, is adding two tombstones to his chest. He doesn't mind having permanent pictures on his body.

"Two of my friends died within the last year," he said. "This tattoo will be for sentimental value. I want it to be there for life."

Mitchell said his mother didn't approve of him marking up his body, but he did it anyway. Ironically, the Charlotteean said he would not want any of his future children to be tattooed.

"But it's for me," he said, with conviction. "This is not for them."

Tattooist Nikki Thompson of Nikki's Tattoo Studio on Monroe Road advises African Americans to avoid some colors: blue, purple and yellow.

"These colors don't usually show up too well," she said. "Also, a lot of Afro-Americans and Asians are prone to develop keloids. If you have keloid scarring, then do not get a tattoo."

Because tattooing is becoming more and more popular, the federal Food and Drug Administration is currently studying its safety.

Permanent tattoos are applied by using a small electric machine with a needle bar that holds from one to 10 needles, each in its own tube. The machine operates like a mini-sewing machine. The needle bar moves up and down as it penetrates through the top and middle layer of the skin, depositing ink along the way.

Small tattoos (up to 3 inches) can generally be completed within an hour. Larger ones may take up to several hours or more, and may be done in more than one sitting. The severity of pain depends on where the tattoo is placed and a person's tolerance level.

The first and most important step in getting a tattoo is to hire a professional tattooist.

"Make sure you go to somewhere that has been approved by the health department," said Thompson, a tattooist for five years. "Don't go to somebody's house and get it done. Also, make sure the person has a working autoclave (a heat sterilization machine regulated by the FDA)."

Kris Sperry, of Atlanta, co-founder of the Alliance of

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## Gifts of Love

By Andrea R. Richards  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

**V**alentine's Day can be stressful for gift givers and receivers.

If your friend gives you a sample box of chocolates after you've given him or her a bouquet of roses and an exquisite dinner, it can be difficult to look grateful. You feel your companion is not creative, just plain cheap, or even worse, both.

There's nothing wrong with trying to cut costs because the price of romance certainly has increased. The country's oldest video dating service, Great Expectations, conducted a study on dating inflation. The report showed a 602 percent increase since 1976.

For example, a dozen long stemmed roses costs \$60 today, \$25 then. Movie admission was \$1.50 in '76,

now it's \$7.50 in some states. Night club admission climbed from \$4 to \$10, while a silk lingerie teddy went from \$4 to \$35.

Here are a few fun, yet inexpensive, ideas to spruce up any Valentine's Day.

Thanks to modern technology, Cupid has entered the Internet. MindSpring Enterprises Inc., an Internet provider based in Atlanta, created a page to order flowers, bottles of perfume, boxes of chocolates or to reserve romantic weekend reservations.

You can also take a test to see how compatible your mate and you are by taking a personality test, and even an IQ test. The MindSpring Web site can be visited at <<http://www.mindspring.com>> or call 1-800-719-4332.

Flowers may smell nice, while chocolate covered cher-

ries can taste good. However, nothing beats the romance of a caring touch.

The First Aid Relationship Kit by Tender Loving Things Inc., is a simple but very effective gift. It includes a large wooden massager, scented massage oil and a tea candle.

"Giving the gift of relaxation and touch is the healthiest and most stress-free present you can give a loved one for Valentine's Day," said Mark Juarez, TLT president. "We consider Valentine's Day the perfect opportunity to encourage people to go out there and massage one another."

The kit costs between \$10-\$12. For more information, call 1-800-486-2896.

Pam Newell, director of Great Expectations, said people don't have to empty their bank account to have a good time.

"Since the cost of romance is



PHOTO/TOM MINGZESKI

The First Aid Relationship Kit is an inexpensive, creative way to spruce up anyone's Valentine's Day. It includes one large wooden massager, a scented massage oil and a tea candle.

up, couples must find creative, sentimental and fun ways to be romantic, such as writing a poem for their partner or preparing an intimate dinner for two," she said.

Gift certificates, baked goods or a personalized cassette tape of sentimental songs are also more thoughtful Valentine's gifts.

## There has never been a love like this

By Andrea R. Richards  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The first official weekend for love will be Feb. 16-18.

The Black Love Weekend, sponsored by the Empowerment Project and the R.I.S.E. Network Youth and Family Enhancement Center,

is a fundraiser with live jazz music, an open buffet, a youth 'jam,' and a family-focused love explosion.

The celebration will kick off with "Jazzin', Jammin', and Lovin'" featuring the the Michael

Porter Trio, 9

p.m.  
Feb. 16 at

Renaissance Place, 631 N. Tryon St. Tickets are \$20 per person and \$35 per couple.

The following night will be the "One Love Jam," a party for young people. Admission is \$5 with a canned good.

The love weekend will conclude 4 p.m. Feb. 18 at Biddle Hall at Johnson C. Smith University. There will be songs, dance, stepping, poetry readings, along with several guest speakers. This event is free.

For more information, call 344-9311.

## Social Lites

### Anniversary celebration

Mr. and Mrs. William S. Conner were married 64 years ago, January 10, 1932, at first Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Charlotte.

Mr. Conner retired from Highland Park Manufacturing Company, after 42 years and Mrs. Conner retired from the Independence Building after 47 years. They attribute their long lived marriage to putting God first



Mr. & Mrs. Conner

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