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We finished shearing at noon on the Sunday of Valentine's Day. After the last bales were unloaded at the wool house, I drove up to the Mertzon place for a nap. I parked on the schoolyard side of the property to keep the trailer from being out in the street. South winds had blown so hard in the night that a pasteboard box had rolled over the school's chain link fence. It was the exact size of the boxes Miss Greengoss used to have to hold Valentines for her fifth grade class.

Being inside the pickup out of the wind felt so good, I just sat and stared at the boxtop flapping in the mighty gusts of wind. Miss Greengoss covered the Valentine boxes in green and red crepe paper, or she did the three parties I attended in her room. Mother helped her every year as she took being room mother mighty serious. She was a good sport about my delayed passage, but she did get testy at PTA programs if one of the women asked her after the fifth grade performed if her son wasn't awful big for his age.

Even sitting there under the oak trees next to the old playground, I wasn't able to bring back all those beautiful girls passing through the room each year. Valentines couldn't be forwarded like e-mail can be today. I tried to join freshman class society by having a second drop a card in the box for a girl I had a crush on, but a big showoff of a tattletale I'd known in the first grade told the principal, Mr. Glasscock.

Mr. Glasscock was so offended by the mere suggestion of a violation of class lines, he threatened to audit every Valentine box in school. In later life I was to run into several carbon copies of Mr. Glasscock. Some were called "Dean Slide Rule Smith" and others "High Pockets Jones" behind their backs. Took us each less than a minute to find out we despised each other. It would have been all right with me if we could have cut the time in half.

Kids driving by in sports cars playing the booming beat of jungle music on the radios knocked me from my reverie. On Monday following Valentines Day, I shopped in Angelo to replenish the groceries from the sheep work. I avoid the grocery stores that attract all the produce pirates in town. I don't like to be around people wearing sweaty gym clothes, stuffing their mouths with grapes, and dropping toothpicks from the food samples in the aisles.

The fashion editor for *Modern Maturity Magazine*, which I follow so faithfully, reported gentlemen were beginning to wear French cuffs and monogrammed shirts again. The only thing French around the Angelo stores is the baguettes of bread, or perhaps a slouchy kid standing out front blowing cigarette smoke through his nostrils. For monograms, all I've seen anywhere were logos written on tee shirts, ranging from common vulgarities to cliches bad enough to make an advertising editor for a radio station sick.

But worse news than ever hit at the store. Right behind the checkout counters, 14 carts full of Valentine candies

were marked half-price. I stood stricken in utter disbelief. Here stood a long row of evidence that Valentines Day had been a complete flop in the Wool Capitol.

Perhaps Super Bowl Sunday was falling too close to Valentine's Day for couples to recover and rekindle from the strain of the football game parties. However, Super Bowl Monday is supposed to be a day of rest and peace to recover from the game. A few romances might have broken up along party lines after the big trial in Washington. As far as the kids buying Valentines, by the time they pay for gold earrings and nose bobs, they may not have the dough for a four-dollar box of candy. Only other reason for the dead market was that the warm winter had caused golf players to overspend on green fees and left them broke.

The circular in the cart snapped right back, announcing that this Monday was President's Day and to load up on Abraham Lincoln style pork and beans and the kind of beef brisket Dolly Madison cooked for the holidays. Hand it to those supermarkets; they don't shed any tears over a bad deal. Be nice if the management sprinkled chocolate candy among the grapes to keep down the thievery, but I guess the next thing to hit would be an onslaught of customers with a sweet tooth.