Perspective

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Love in the time of The Shattertones

I'm just sayin'

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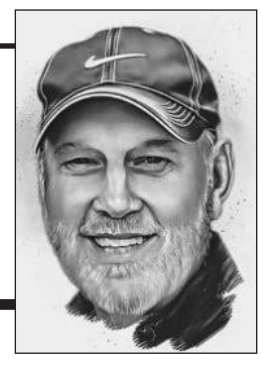

In 1988, Phil Deaver (TCHS 65) won the coveted O. Henry prize, awarded to the nation's best short story, for "Arcola Girls."

Phil's story begins: "On Saturday night, Arcola girls would come north on the two-lane for the dance…. There was one Arcola girl I remember named Rhonda Hart, a wild girl with dark brown hair and strange, blue catlike eyes. Each Saturday night, late, when the dance was almost over and the room was humid and warm like hot breath, a group would gather around Rhonda, who was by then dancing alone, doing, if the chaperones weren't looking, a pantomime of taking her clothes off to a grinding-on-and-on rendition of "Louie, Louie"….

With "Arcola Girls" Phil was recalling the Saturday night dance at the Tuscola Community Building known as The Wick. It featured live rock and roll bands of the region, bands like Lois Lee and The Rockets, Jim Easter and the Artistics, and The Shattertones. And he was writing about out-of-town girls that seemed "exotic" to most of us.

I say exotic because out-of-town girls—teens came from all over Douglas County and beyond—had that unknown, mysterious allure to them. Not that Tuscola girls weren't fantabulous—they were. But we knew them so well, having been in class with them for 12 years. We were friends. And while friendship might be warm and comforting and familiar, it's not rip-your-heart-out exotic.

Phil was writing about that idealized dream gal you'd sell the farm for and move to Albania to herd goats, if that's what it took.

But first, there was dancing, of which there were two: fast and slow. During fast dances, the gals often danced with each other while most guys formed a large circle around this sea of gyrating beauty, quietly watching (for the right person) and waiting (for the right time).

I was always so indecisive—they all looked great to me—and adverse to rejection, I often waited too long. Just as I screwed up my courage and took a step toward the dance floor, the lights flipped on, the band sacked the drums, and everyone headed out.

The fast dances included the Mashed Potatoes, The Swim, The Monkey and, the ever popular Jerk. Few guys could master the precision choreography demanded by these complicated dances so we usually passed on fast dancing.

Slow-dancing was another matter. Guys always waited for the Platter's classic, "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes." Very slow, very romantic.

Back then, slow dancing was an art form. Experienced guys knew just where to place the intertwined hands and how close you could cradle the gal in your arms without violating some slow dance norm—imposed by wary adult chaperones

If it was my first dance with someone I didn't know, I often held them so far away that we were dancing in different time zones. I longed to pull her back to Central Standard Time.

I looked around and noticed some couples had melded into one, the guys' arms wrapped tight around her—like a double Heimlich for the back—the girls' arms locked around his neck. Usually, these "two became one" couples were going steady. You could tell from the mohair wrapped around this huge ring on her finger, being his class ring.

If you could get a gal to wrap some mohair around something you own, and display it on her person, well, taking her home to meet mom was near.

The haircut of the day for a guy was either a flat top or a duck's tail (DA), where the hair on the side was grown a little longer, lathered in some gel lotion, and combed straight back where the two sides met in the rear in a little swirly tuft not unlike, say, Donald Duck's derriere.

I was already going so bald that many girls mistook me for an adult chaperone, which explained why, when I walked toward them as "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" started to play, they ran away. That had to be it.

Girls dressed classily, many wearing Jackie Onassis Kennedy shift dresses. But mini-skirts were new on the scene and as they gained popularity the Wick exploded in popularity for teen males.

Admittedly, tension hung in the air as these dances presented an opportunity for finding a mate. And that led to some problems, often aggravated by malt-based-muscle relaxants.

The problem was when two males were interested in one female. When that happened, it could devolve into outright battle.

Once or twice I briefly thought about confronting the taunts of another. But then it seemed that behind every opponent I selected to challenge—based upon them being much smaller than me—there stood a huge monster of a best-friend-fighter standing right behind them, scowling at me.

When that happened, I turned around to see who was going to stand with me—"Who stands with Mike Carroll?" I asked out loud, turning around, and noticing my friends rushing toward the restroom.

Good buddy Engo was no where to be seen this one night when I had gotten an "Ed and Red kill-stare." Seems he and fellow classmates had driven down to Paducah, Kentucky, for coffee and eggs earlier in the evening. I know this because when they pulled up outside the Community Building at midnight Greg Skinner opened the trunk of his car and showed me the broken off city sign for Paducah.

Oh my, what hijinks. What an emotionally powerful and memorable time Phil captured in his story.

And that music! I'll go to my grave thinking of the Shattertones signing "Hi Ho Silver" where, at the end, they belted out: "BBBBRRRRRRRRR diggggiiii uh mau mau, apoppa uh mau mau, apoppa uh mau mau, diggggiiiiuuuhhhh mau mau, poppa uh mau mau, a poppa uh mau mau…."

These inspirational words guided my generation in their crucial future life decisions.

Too bad we had no idea what they meant.

mike carroll

Dating advice from a guy who was never good at it

Ramblin' Man

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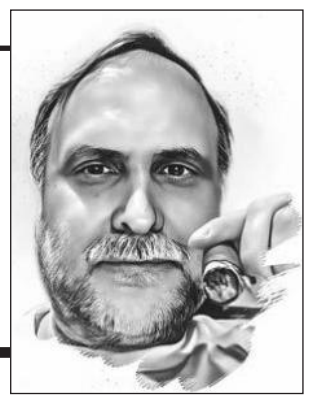

It's a good thing I got married again because I'm not very good at dating. Worse than that, I was never very good at getting the date to begin with. While my friends were concerned about how to get from first base to second, I was wondering where the batter's box was. I was a world-class authority on the art of striking out.

So, naturally, I feel compelled to offer my tips on how to date. Who knows better than me what doesn't work? I just wish I could go back in time and give the teen me a little advice; this is what I would tell him:

First, you have to understand what dating isn't. Dating is not a lifelong commitment. You're not buying a house. Forget about what the future may hold and just enjoy the moment.

If it helps, think of dating as hanging out. There's no harm in hanging out, right? You're just trying to get to know someone. If you start out thinking about marriage and growing old together, you'll talk yourself out of dating anyone you don't already know well.

Plus, your first date probably isn't going to be your last; practice dating is a good thing.

Once you have a handle on the dating perspective, the second thing to learn is to ask for what you want. Yes, rejection sucks, but not asking is a form of rejection. Why do the rejecting for her? As a pal recently reminded me: You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take.

Which leads me to persistence. Don't be a stalker, but if you really want to go out with someone, you might need to ask her more than once. "No" does not mean "never;" it means "not right now."

If you're lucky and she agrees to go out with you, have a plan. Offer options but be decisive. Ask her what she likes to do and be ready with suggestions. For instance, you can ask: Do you want to go to Restaurant A or would you rather try Restaurant B? If she says, "I don't care," and she will say it, then make a decision. She will appreciate that you gave her options, but she also wants to know that you're able to take charge.

Give the relationship time to develop, but don't settle. If you've been dating someone for a year and you don't really want to be in the relationship, then get out. Why waste your time and hers?

If it's only been a month and you're not happy, consider why you're not happy and communicate that to her. It's OK to tell the girl you're dating that something feels amiss. Perhaps she feels the same way. Maybe she's willing to make a change to improve the relationship. Maybe she can help you make a change that will allow you to accept her imperfections. The first step toward working as a team is to be a team player.

Be willing to bend on things that don't matter. And don't expect everything to fall into your preconceived order. "Different" doesn't mean "wrong." You want to be your own person so be willing to let her be her own person.

Well, that's all I've got. What did you expect from a guy who sucks at dating?

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PUZZLES

CLUES ACROSS
1. Half-conscious states
8. Unnatural
13. Deep regret
14. Rogue
15. Took without permission
19. An alternative
20. After B
21. Partner to "flowed"
22. The best day of the week (abbr.)
23. Helps you hear
24. Egyptian river
25. Lake __, one of the Great
26. Make free from bacteria
30. Indigenous peoples of central Canada
31. Sanctuaries in Greek temples
32. Most unclothed
33. NJ senator Booker
34. Tibetan lake
35. Desecrate something sacred
38. John __, English educator l467-l5l9
39. Obtains in return for labor
40. Views
44. Rugged cliff
45. Not quiet
46. Body part
47. Newt
48. German city
49. A way to save money
50. NBC's Roker
51. Dire Straits frontman
55. Actress Lathan
57. Most meager
58. Poems
59. Companions

CLUES DOWN
1. Draws over
2. Recur
3. Current unit
4. Neither
5. Certified Radio Operator (abbr.)
6. Power of perception
7. Peace
8. Supplemented with difficulty
9. The last section or part of anything
10. Dorm worker
11. Bones
12. Most unnatural
16. Spanish island
17. The skill to do something
18. Where golf games begin
22. Untethered
25. Print errors
27. The sport of engaging in contests of speed
28. Ones to look up to
29. Stringed instrument
30. Gives whippings
32. Type of tie
34. Make more concentrated
35. Die
36. Part of a winter hat
37. Young men's club
38. Bathrooms need it
40. U.S. president
41. American novelist
42. Take into custody
43. Hurts
45. Type of gibbon
48. American actor Lukas
51. Partner to cheese
52. Some are covert
53. Political action committee
54. To and __
56. Atomic #28

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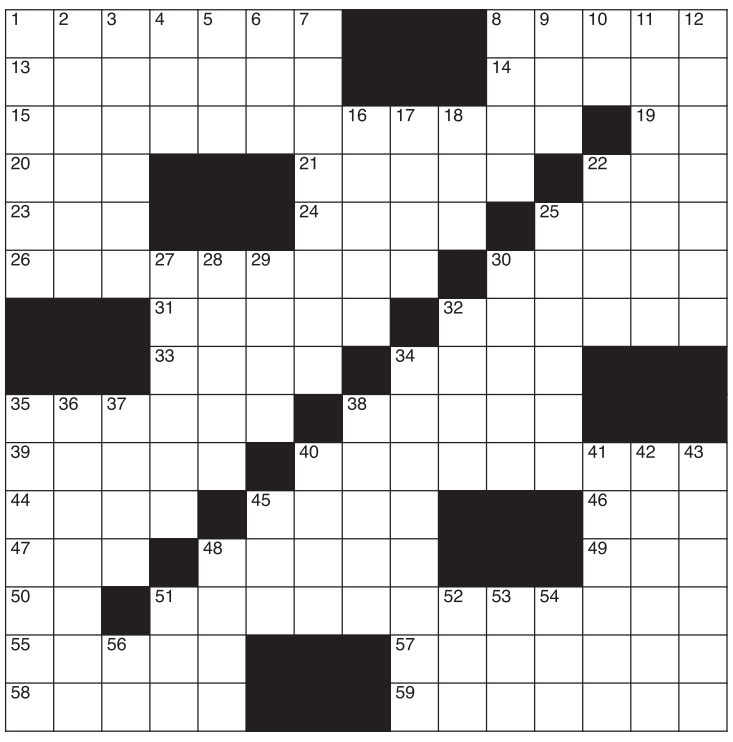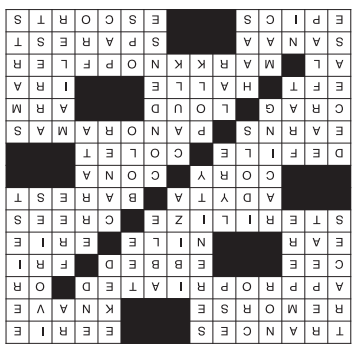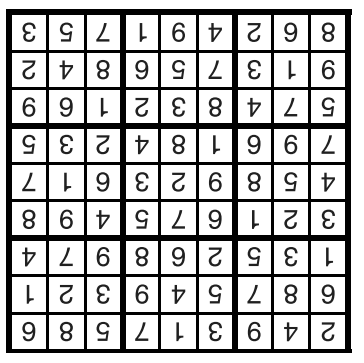
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