

AH, ROMANCE!
His memorable Valentine's Day Gift for Wife
Slices right to the heart of the matter.
By J. B. Leftwich, Columnist
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"Boy, this time you'll never guess what I'm giving you for Valentine's Day."

"Two tickets to Hawaii," she said, gazing out of the breakfast room window at three inches of snow.

"Well," I said. "Something a little more modest."

"Two tickets to Key West?"

"Even more modest," I said.

"Two tickets to Standing Stone State Park?"

Whoa! Was she reading me?

Had her highly developed intuition pierced my armor and revealed my secret?

Standing Stone State Park. That's where the story began. In late summer, 1940.

When our marriage was one year old, and she was working for the county agriculture office where I was still in college. She had a salary. I didn't. She bought the knife.

We were on our way to Standing Stone for an office picnic with her co-workers. Just outside the Livingston city limits, we saw a pile of watermelons. Seventy-five cents each. Everybody like watermelon, so we bought a big one.

Then we remembered we had no knife large enough to cut and slice the melon.

Not to worry, we would buy one. Indeed, we didn't own a butcher knife at that point in our marriage, so the money would not be wasted. We stopped at a general store. Sure enough, there was a selection of butcher knives. The knife cost 50 cents.

Years passed, and we bought other butcher knives. More expensive they were but none that sliced as well as the knife bought in Livingston. Our children recognized its quality, so each asked to be remembered in our wills – with the Livingston knife.

But, alas! As the years rolled by, the handle deteriorated and split away from the hilt to the degree that the knife was almost useless. Who would know how to put a new handle on an old knife?

Finally, the answer. The Antique Doctor. And he did. For \$10, but not without a warning. The hilt was so rusted that he doubted it would last. He was right, but for a few months my wife had her knife back in use.

As its condition worsened, she finally was using a knife shaped roughly like Cupid's bow. Which reminded me Valentine's Day was approaching, and as usual, I had no idea for a romantic present for her.

Off to Curtis Welding Co. in Lebanon where Robin agreed to weld onto the blade a new hilt. The finished job far exceeded my fondest expectation. The charge was a modest \$10.

Then off to the Antique Doctor for a new handle, this time at a cost of \$23.00. At this stage, I had \$43.50 in the knife, including the original cost.

You don't just give your wife an old butcher knife on Valentine's Day, so off to buy an appropriate Valentine's card. I looked at the price \$4.47. I put it back on the shelf. This gift was becoming too expensive.

In the meantime, I bragged about how clever I was to think of something she wanted but was unable to identify. "Never in a million years will you guess what I have for you," I boasted.

She obviously was puzzled. This time, I had pulled it off. I had a gift which would completely fool her. But I decided not to push my luck. Say no more until I presented it.

I did mention to her last week that I had her a gift in my truck.

"You might as well go get it," she said. "I have been needing it ever since you slipped out with it. I can use it now."

Silence. Astonishment. And disappointment. How did she figure it out this time?

"I just needed it, and I couldn't find it. So, listening to what you said about my Valentine's present, it was pretty obvious what you had for me."

Then she added: "I appreciate it."

So much for romantic Valentine's Day presents.

And so much for deceiving my wife.

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