

1958

MY FIRST KISS: AN EXPERIMENT IN TERROR



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The best I can recall, I was about 12 when I got my first kiss. It was the second most frightening event in my life — and I forget the first.

To understand the horror, one must understand the school system of the 1950s. We never discussed sex in school. Although I do recall a chart that showed that if a blonde, blue-eyed male married a brunette, brown-eyed female, the probability of having kids — by color of hair and color of eyes — was illustrated, there was NO mention of how one got from hair and eyes to babies with hair and eyes.

It was more important to our education to know that one got a haircut every two weeks, wore shirts with colors, and behaved acceptably than to be able to deal with the hormones that were crashing around in our bodies like unguided missiles.

We were, repeatedly, told that if one “messed around,” the girl got pregnant and would disappear. I do remember at least two girls who began to put on weight and, suddenly, got “accepted” into an all-girl school in Valdosta, Georgia. One of them, I saw two years later. She had solved her weight problem but had been labeled a “bad girl.” (At the time, I never was sure why.)

Even our role models — John Wayne, the Lone Ranger, and Sheriff Matt Dillon — never kissed. If you went to the drive in theater to see kissing, you had to wait until the last scene and watch very closely or you missed it.

Our sex education was supposed to come from our parents or our church — neither of which was willing to deal with the subject. Any mention of what one does when one falls in love was met with the text-book reply, “Good girls don’t do that” — whatever *that* was.

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All I knew was that if I got too “friendly” with a girl, she would get pregnant, she would gain weight, she would disappear, and my family would lose face in the community. I guessed that we would all go into hiding, not unlike the “witness protection program” one hears about today.

Well, back to the kiss.

One of my friends held a party at his parent’s home. It was well chaperoned, with four parents being everywhere at once. However, as the night wore on — the party went on until 11pm — the parents began to huddle in a small group, in the comfort of the front porch, and talk about whatever parents talked about.

Since we were dancing on the back porch, we were relatively alone. Actually, I didn’t do much dancing because, other than instructions in the “box step” in gym, I had no experience with such matters. My role was to be able to tell jokes and provide answers to trivia questions.

However, a girl whose name I don’t even remember — and didn’t know at the time — asked me to join her in a slow dance. I accepted and very quickly we were fumbling around trying to miss each other’s feet. After two dances, in a row, she began to realize that I was more than just a humorist and the conversation turned very quickly into a serious conversation around why people are attracted to each other.

The second dance ended and we talked while the fast dance interrupted our dancing struggles.

However, the minute a new slow dance began, she took my hand and silently led me to the dance floor. As the song “Love Letters in the Sand,” by Pat Boone, ended. She kissed me. It was NOT a peck, it was a passionate, tongue-in-mouth event!

I was terrified. I broke away. HOW could I have allowed myself to become involved in this situation? What was I going to do now? My reputation AND her’s was in ruins — AND it was my fault because I had done this “thing.”

I stared in disbelief. She stared in confusion. I fled the scene.

I don’t know how far it was. I just know that I ran all the way home. Not knowing what to do, I had to hide. I tossed and turned all night. I awoke early the next morning and, when my mother got up, I confessed.

“I got a girl pregnant last night,” I confessed.

My mom's knees buckled. She leaned heavily upon her hand braced upon the kitchen counter by the sink, oblivious to the water running in the sink.

"WHAT?!?" she all but screamed, totally in shock at what I had told her. She sunk into a nearby chair from the kitchen table.

When I explained what had happened, she laughed and assured me that I could not have gotten her pregnant because that was not how pregnancy was induced.

Of course, polite society precluded her from telling me exactly how it was induced; but, she assured me that was not the way it happens.

I never saw that girl again.

My buddies assumed I had realized that I was past my curfew so I saved face with the only ones who really mattered to a 12-year-old boy.

But I sure would like to have kissed that girl one more time.