

BOYNTON BEACH ROMEOS

(Raunchy Old Men Eating Out)

By William Rabinowitz

When we hear the name Romeo, or Romeos in this case, visions of love-besotted youth in Shakespeare's immortal tragic love story, Romeo and Juliet, play in our minds. Most of us have seen Romeo and Juliet the movie. We were forced to go to what our children call a "Chick Flick". You know the movie the girl picks and you go to just so the girl will think you have a sensitive side and maybe she will be sensitive to your needs later that evening. I doubt if taking her to see the Dirty Dozen, A Fistfull of Dollars or Rambo would have the same after movie effect on the ladies.

What is most surprising about seeing the "Chick Flick", once your ear begins to actually understand the foreign British accent of the actors, you actually get into the story. The story is about two star-crossed lovers who by their mistaken suicides bring an end to the feuding of their respective pretentious noble families, the Capulets and the Montagues in fair Verona.

I suppose there once may have been a real Romeo and Juliet but in Boynton Beach, Florida? It is very unlikely than anyone here except the illegal alien who is cutting the lawn for the condo association would have a name like Romeo. Or is it Romero? Either way the only Juliet I ever knew of was a long legged dancer named Juliet Prowse and she certainly never lived in Boynton Beach.

Around here the two star crossed lovers would more likely be named Harvey and Mildred, or Sam and Sylvia. It just does not have the same ring..

Mildred - "O Harvey, Harvey! Wherefore art thou Harvey?"

Harvey - "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Mildred is the sun!"

Alas and alack, were to fore and fore sooth, this tale is not about Harvey and Mildred, it is about the Romeos of Boynton Beach- “Raunchy Old Men Eating Out.”

My friend, Jerry, from Long Island, comes down to Boynton Beach every year with his wife just after Thanksgiving. They stay a bit over a month, usually until just after New Years. That gives them the opportunity to throw the annual Chanukah – party on December 25. Their holiday specialties are latkes with apple- sauce; full sized hot dogs wrapped and then baked in defrosted Pillsbury Crescent rolls and washed down with pink Gallo Reserve Vintage Zinfandel. Berringer can be substituted but that depends on what is on sale at the ABC Liquor store the day before erev Christmas.

Jerry and a fellow traveler from Long Island brought a transplanted Long Island tradition to Boynton Beach – Romeos at the Costcos.

At first plus it sounds awful, a bunch of silver fringed pates and expanding waistline old men roaming the grocery aisles and merchandise displays of the giant Costco Wholesale warehouse searching for romantic liaisons. Few silver mained Yentas grace the concrete walkways of Costco in Boynton Beach – they simply send the husbands. The Yenta cannot imagine giving up her appointment with Helene or Jeff at Boris’s Heavenly Spa and Nail Salon. Appointments for the all day works, toes, nails, haircut, coloring to any shade of the rainbow that will hide the ugly gray roots and set. Blow-drying is extra. Appointments are made a month in advance. Demand is that great.

Being a snowbird is bad enough but if you are a snowflake, forget it - maybe if you beg nicely enough they will fit you in just after the early bird crowd has exited for dinner.

Send the husband to the store is the Yenta mantra. He has no life. It will give them something to do instead of clipping every coupon in the papers for items that are unusable, unwanted and unneeded. Actually all of those items purchased at the Walgreens or CVS Pharmacy Sunday insert ads do have a purpose. The male of the household goes scouring the countryside for the best price and brings home the trophy proudly to the wife. The male hunter has returned successfully with the quarry. So they think.

Having freshly returned from Boris's the discerning head of the home simply pronounces judgment – return it – we don't need it, without ever touching the item. Their nails have not dried yet. So, the dejected hunter must return the hard fought for prize to the Walgreen or the CVS in the morning.

Hope bounds eternal in the breast of the Boynton Beach male hunter and breadwinner. There is always a tomorrow, always a new coupon to be clipped and always-another possible conquest that will pass muster once it comes home.

But back to the Romeos, roaming the cavernous Boynton Beach Costco in search of the mysterious Shicksa flower. The Shicksa flower is squeezed into denim jeans two sizes too small that the Romeo's wife could not fit into thirty pounds ago. They have piles of red and blond hair on heads that have never met Helene or Jeff. Their nails are self-done and their scent is one of liberating, forbidden fruit.

It is unfair to suggest the Romeos spend every day at the Costco. Actually there are rules and regulations to be a Romeo. Not everyone qualifies as Romeo. Not all Romeos are alike; some can do it more than once every two weeks without being coerced. The Yenta code shares that information discreetly with Jeff and Helene, no one else unless they happen to be listening in. Once they become comfortable with their hairdresser or personal beauty engineer, the Yenta will tell their own Helene or Jeff everything; even more than their own doctor(s) or fellow Yentas. It is not nice to gossip and who is Helene or Jeff going to tell..... Why do women have this need to tell? I don't understand.

The Romeos are a growing community with rules and regulations. They meet once a week, every week, religiously Friday's at 11:30am. It does not matter if it rains or shines. A hurricane is considered a legitimate reason to cancel. The Romeo membership has grown from two to eight at last count: Irwin, Stanley, Jerry, Fred, Milton, Teddy, David and Anwar. Anwar...?

Whoever arrives first secures the seats – two picnic tables pushed together. Most of the guys try and get to the Costco a bit early. Gas is generally 2 cents cheaper a gallon there than anywhere else. Parking is not frequently an issue as enough of them have the ritually required disabled placard with the graphic of the person in a wheelchair hanging from their rear view mirror.

Someone in the family had an ingrown toe nail two years ago and their cousin Sheldon's kid is a doctor - so they have a badge of honor. The blue and white badge proudly dangles while driving letting the world know that they are disabled; watch out. Watching out is the issue. The placard clearly states in **BOLD LETTERS** do not hang from the rear view mirror while driving, it obscures your vision of the road. It is understood that anyone driving with a disabled badge hanging from the rear view mirror is not physically disabled. They are mentally disabled. It is a clear warning to anyone driving near them that they are dangerous, insane drivers.

Lunch is a \$1.99 Hebrew National Hotdog, relish, mustard, onions optional and large coke or the \$2.49 pizza slice and large coke. Everyone must buy their own lunch. If a wife should bizarrely come along, she has to sit at a separate table. Wives never can be Romeos.

Sometimes, a Romeo is out of town. Dutifully, a cell phone is taken out and placed in the middle of the table. The missing Romeo is called and the hands free speaker is turned on. Whoever can't make it joins electronically frequently bringing his own lunch and coke. A Romeo who misses three meetings in a row must buy lunch for all the Romeos. If a member dies, the Romeos buy a Hot Dog in the deceased's memory. The dog is cut, ritually into the appropriate number of pieces and eaten in somber reflection. For the hour and a half lunch – each member regales the others with jokes and tales of his pre-retired life. Irwin was a T.V. Cable installer executive. Jerry was a Bar Mitzvah bandleader; Stanley claims to have been a forensic entomologist with all sorts of wild bug stories. He once wowed the guys with a tale of how he was asked to fly to Cairo to examine a recently found mummy for tell tale bugs to determine the cause of death. Actually Stanley owned a cosmetics store in Merrimac, N.Y. but Anwar bought the story– Good old Anwar.....even he had a good laugh once he realized the joke. No Romeo's life is too mundane not to share an enraptured tale or two. The Romeos laugh, they shmooze, they tell dirty jokes. They enjoy their male camaraderie and then they shop.

Shopping has rules. The wives assign shopping lists. The Romeos are not allowed to go off pushing their shopping carts alone. They must go in pairs. One to be on the lookout for special sale items and one to be on the lookout for the best Shicksa flower they can see. Cell phones were invented for one of these special reasons. A rare flower is spotted and a flurry of phone calls brings the Romeos together. They gaggle together debating the merits and

the mechanical achievement of the how did she ever get into those pants. It is innocent enough. They don't leer, they don't point, and they don't jeer. But, secretly they sure wish their Yenta could fit into a pair of jeans like that.

Sometimes the wife's shopping list is complicated. For example, buy 7 navel oranges, but the bags come in 12 counts – now what. If they bring home 12 they get the look of – I asked for seven. There is a procedure. The extra five navels are divided up between the membership and the cost of the bag and the items split after checkout. How each Romeo explains the extra navel to his Juliet is a private mystery that they don't share with each other or even Helene or Jeff.

Every Costco has a shopping receipt checker at the exit door, which is big enough to drive a tractor-trailer though. Why, because Costco is convinced that in the thirty or forty feet from the cashier to the door someone might have sneaked a 50" flat screen color T.V. into the cart and did not pay for it. Or maybe it was simply an extra navel orange. Can the receipt checker guarding the exit from the store whose door way is large enough to drive a tractor-trailer through actually able to check every item in the cart – no. At the Romeo's Costco, there is a regular checker who knows the Romeo's well – Vanessa. Vanessa is used to their meshugas and she smiles without checking anything except to place her pink check mark on the cash register receipt of each Romeo.

All the Romeos return home early enough to be sure and pick up their wives from Boris. It is important not to be late or else the early bird will no longer be available. Lateness ensures a sharp disagreement; the Friday night Ketubah duty will be cancelled.

God forbid!

Dictionary

Erev – evening

Yentas – gossiping ladies

Shicksa – Non Jewish female – the forbidden fruit

Bar Mitsvah - Age of 13 – marking transition to religious obligation

Schmooze – visiting with a friend and sharing stories

Meshugas – silliness

Ketubah – Religious Marriage contract spelling out obligations

