

EVERYBODY'S GOING STEADY

By Rev. Raymond Wahl

ANYONE brash enough to write a pamphlet on “going steady” runs a risk of complete frustration.

In the first place, hundreds of boys and girls who should read it, won't. They will grimace at the title on the cover and snort, “Ha, some more of that pious prattle”.

In the second place, most of those who do read it will finish with this brilliant and deadly observation: “Not bad—some good ideas in it after all. I'll have to give Ed and Carol a copy; they really need it. But right now I'd better call Sue to see if she can go to the show with me tonight.”

Young people today aren't too enthused about pamphlets that tell them not to go steady. And why should they be?

Why, for instance, should Tom and Sue be interested? You know them, don't you? Tom and Sue are both good Catholic kids, going into their final year in school. Maybe they're in your class.

TOM . . .

Tom is tall, not a bad athlete, a smooth dancer, does okay in his studies, and comes from a good family. What more could a girl want out, of life?

. . . AND SUE

And Sue is about 5ft. 5in., brunette, nice looking, loves to dance, play tennis, and can have a good time just sitting around at home or talking to a fellow over a coke. She's just a good all-round girl. Where could a fellow find someone nicer?

Tom and Sue have both dated others before. Tom was wild over a redhead last year, and Sue has dated most of the athletes from her brother's school.

But somehow, as soon as Tom and Sue met and had their first date, they knew this was different. They danced every piece together that night. The juke box played “Stardust” over and over again and even now, fourteen months later, they still both feel good whenever they hear “our song”. Sue could hardly go to sleep that night, and Tom put an extra wave in his hair the next morning before he rushed off to school.

SO MUCH FUN

That's how it all began. Since then they have had so much fun together. Sue would cheer Tom on as he struggled out on the football field or she would clap whenever he kicked a goal for the school, and then after the game they'd go out and drink a coke, and he would tell her all about it, and she would sit there, proud, listening intently to her hero. Gee, it was nice for a fellow to have a girl like her.

And the dances, they had never been like this before—the Term Dance, the Easter Carnival, and the School Ball. Tom wore a white jacket and black trousers, and Sue looked like an angel in white net, with a baby pink rose corsage pinned over her heart. The whole night was like a dream come true and when Tom said good night, and brushed his lips against hers, they knew that even heaven couldn't be nicer than this. This was it, this was the real thing—they're going steady.

“BREAK IT UP”

And now somebody comes along and says, “Okay, break it up. You shouldn't go steady, you're missing half the fun of high school days. Go out with a different fellow or girl.”

“Are they crazy? We should break up, just when we're having a good time? No Sir, Sue and I are going steady and it's fine with me.”

Okay, that's their side of the picture, and to them it looks good. Now let's give the author a chance and see what he has

to say. Briefly, it's this: going steady, for fellows and girls in school, - is poor psychology, unwise, and dangerous. Now don't throw the pamphlet away. Let me explain.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY POOR

Going steady is poor psychology. When boys and girls are in grade school, the "gang" is everything. A fellow doesn't think much of himself, but of the kids down the street, or "East Side Mob". Girls have their "circles" too, but don't call them by such vulgar names.

But when they get into their teens they rapidly forget about the gang, become more conscious of their own selves; in fact, they become too self-conscious. The young fellow notices that he is an individual, a person. He begins to worry about himself, feel ill at ease when in crowds-, notices that he is too tall and lanky or short and fat, his teeth are poor or complexion bad. He is never really sure of himself when with others. And don't say that only he is this way. Notice how awkward and clumsy the rest of "the boys" are.

The teen age is the age of personal insecurity, of inner worrying about oneself; the teenager withdraws into himself, is afraid to say much, never knows just how to act, and so he withdraws into his own little shell, like a clam. But even a clam must be brought out of its shell before it can be of any use to anybody.

A SOCIAL BEING

To develop properly into a sane, real man or woman, the boy or girl must come out of himself or herself, and learn to be social. He or she must learn how to act in an easy, friendly manner with all sorts of people. They must learn to be kind to people who like or dislike them, to be at ease with all types, to be able to talk intelligently on many different topics, to forget their own personal troubles, worries, jealousies and angers, by getting interested in others.

The best way to do this is to mix freely with all boys and girls, not to withdraw from the "hard, cruel world" with one friend, but to meet socially and friendly with all. That is good teen-age psychology.

The usual "steadies" fail to do this. They withdraw from their friends; they date, dance, talk to one person, or about only one person. They are satisfied with each other, make no effort to get out and develop socially just at the stage of life when they need most of all to do so. Their other friends see that they want to be alone and so they leave them alone.

CONVENIENT

The more exclusive the two are, the sooner they run out of ideas to exchange, the sooner they take each other for granted. Tom doesn't have to call Sue three weeks early to arrange a dance. He knows she will be waiting. He can visit her in overalls with unbrushed teeth; she will be there. She doesn't bother sparking up for Tom any more. She has him "hooked". No longer must she be at her charming best to secure a date for the dance. She knows she has one with her steady.

How convenient!

True, it is convenient for her; it takes away all worry about a date, but it also takes away the thrill, the excitement, the wonder, of going with a new fellow, which every normal girl should experience often. How flattered Tom would feel if he knew he was being kept around "for convenience sake".

A DEEP RUT

And so the two go off by themselves, like a tired old married couple, two of a kind in dirty T-shirts and overalls, away from the lively circle of young people, from all the varied friends and' activities that could help them to grow up normally, away by themselves to deepen their own rut.

Soon the thrill of the first dances fades away and Sue imagines that Tom is looking for someone else. She becomes jealous, angry, snobbish with the girl who is trying to cut in. Old girl friends suffer when Sue loses her temper. She hounds out Tom, pouts when out with him, becomes little, catty, and mean. Tom becomes tired and disgusted with her,

begins to realize how foolish he has been, how much fun he has missed with the boys, how little he and Sue had in common, and wonders what he ever saw in her in the first place. Let's hope they break up soon so they can begin to lead normal lives with the crowd again.

Let me finish this first reason for not going steady by asking you to think of a boy you know, say a school boy, who has just broken up after two years of going steady. Did you ever see a poorer fish out of water? He doesn't know how to act with anyone else. He has so few friends, he's shy in the crowd, he's lost with other girls, he's in a daze because, he never grew up socially the way he should have in high school. Pity the poor fish!

PRE-ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

Tom and Sue are unwise to go steady so young.

Going steady should be the period in life reserved for the six months before engagement. During that time they get to know more about the one boy or girl they have chosen from the dozens of prospects whom they dated in their young lives. They should have gone with tall and short boys, blondes and brunettes, jovial and serious ones; and from all these they pick an ideal one who is the combination of all that was best in each one of their dates. They have been around—in the best sense of the word—and they know what they want in a husband or wife. Then they go steady for six months with this one, are engaged if they still think this is the one, and finally they get married.

PRESENTLY IMPRACTICAL

That's the way it should be; so how foolish are the young people in school who go steady. In the first place, they can't usually be married for at least four or five years. Like it or not, it takes money, education, maturity, and real love to marry today,, not infatuation alone. If you asked me if you should go steady with someone, I would first ask you if you two could get married within a year. If you can't, because you are too young, or he has no job that pays enough to support a wife and family, or one of you wants to go to study for a few years, don't go steady.

In the second place, the "steadies" haven't gone with enough different company to make a sensible choice. Did you ever buy a tie in a store where you had only one necktie to choose from? Of course not! Remember that marriage is important for your temporal and eternal happiness. A wrong choice of partner can give you a hell in, this world and almost certainly in the next. It's wise to ponder that choice carefully, with plenty of possibilities from which to choose.

MORALLY DANGEROUS

Lastly, and most important, going steady is dangerous for young people.

Let's look at Tom and Sue again. Remember that night when Tom gently kissed Sue for the first time? That kiss was sacred, a sign of real friendship and affection for both of them, as pure as a mother's loving kiss for her baby. Would to God it could always stay that way!

But neither of them is a wooden Indian; both are made of flesh and blood; both suffer from original sin; both have passions. The next time they date, that kiss will be repeated. It won't be long before some of that first thrill wears off, so they kiss a little more ardently to recapture it.

When first they danced together, both were a little stiff. Now Sue can fit snugly into Tom's enveloping arm.

Sue wore a very modest net dress that first formal. Now it is a little less decent.

ENTER SIN

Tom is a little more possessive to show that she is his girl. No longer do they drive straight home after the dance. A brief stop "to talk" in the park, a chat in the car in front of her house becomes the usual routine on the date.

The kisses are oftener, more prolonged, and almost before they realize it the brief sign of affection with less reserve can so easily develop into necking and the protective arm around her can slip into petting. Sin slyly enters in to become a third party to this exclusive couple.

OBJECTION

By now, the reader is objecting strongly, “We’re going steady and we never committed sin together.”

And I agree and say, “Of course, I didn’t mean you, but if you are a man or woman of flesh and blood and you continue to go steady while still at school, I have my doubts about how long you will stay out of sin. One thing just naturally leads to another, until it’s too late. And remember, you don’t have to go all the way to commit serious sin. Just that one good-night kiss could be a serious sin if you take impure pleasure from it. But even if your good-night kisses aren’t sinful in themselves, they may cause you to commit sins of thought or desire by yourselves days later. On the date you two just had a little innocent fun together; later, when all alone in your room, you might feel a desire to repeat that fun, and wish you had gone just a little further for the thrill of it. When these thoughts start coming, watch out!

SOFT AND WEAK

“Another thing, going steady may lead one to yield to temptation to personal sins weeks later. The one who is soft and mushy when on a date, even though he commits no serious sin then, is going to find himself soft and weak in repelling temptations when they come to him while alone. And if he falls, ‘steady dating will be part of the cause. A person has just one moral life; weaken it by softness, by going as far as possible without committing sin when out with the steady, and you may find yourself too weak when temptation to personal sin comes later.

“And don’t forget, you may not have committed sin, but how about your date? You are both different. You may be showing him affection. He may be taking pleasure that will send his soul to hell. If you really love him, would you want to be the cause of his eternal damnation? You may be, if you continue to go steady.”

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Some day, patient reader, you will probably be married and raising a family.

To do that well, to have a happy married life, you shall need God’s help. You can be assured of that if you live your courtship days in the pure, clear way that God wants. To help you to do this, I say, don’t go steady in high school. If your boy friend or best girl is to be the one, going out with others will only develop your appreciation for him or her. Dating Mary will prove to you that Sue is the one. If he or she is not to be the one, don’t go steady with him or her. Break it up before it hurts you both, socially now, spiritually forever.

Even after all these arguments against going steady while at school, some of the readers still won’t be convinced.

They are wrong, of course, but they will never admit it and will persist in dating their little Sue and only her. So for them, and for the many who are rightly going steady for a few months before engagement, may I offer the following simple rules to keep their dating on the high, decent level where it should be.

PROPER ATTITUDE

First of all, have the right attitude of mind.

As Tom shines his shoes or Sue combs her hair before going out, they should each have the determination in the back of their heads that they are going to walk back into the house through the front door just as pure, clean, and modest as they were when they walked out several hours before. Their date is going to be an evening of real friendship, of enjoyable companionship, of a lot of good clean fun and excitement, not a sickening, passionate destruction of all one’s ideals in a darkened theatre or a parked car somewhere. Both should be more concerned and determined about the question., “How can we keep our dating days pure?” rather than, “How far can I go without committing sin?” As an old song once said, “Accentuate the positive” (I want to be pure) and “Eliminate the negative” (when is necking wrong?).

Tom, as he picks up Sue, is determined to treat her as he would want his own sister to be treated, to respect her as Christ respected His Mother, to be more concerned about protecting her soul than he would be about protecting her body if a thief tried to injure her while they were out together. And Sue realizes that the girl is the one ‘who sets the tone for the whole evening. If she wears a low-cut dress, clings tightly to Tom like a vine on the darkened dance floor, asks to be

taken for a ride around the park and snuggles up to the driver, leaving enough room in the front seat for three other people to get in, she knows what to expect before leaving Tom that evening! Whereas, if she dresses, dances, talks decently and keeps the evening lively, Tom will fall into line and things will work out very well. It's a dumb girl who can't handle a "fast fellow".

And just before they meet each other, their last preparation is not a jerking at a tie or arranging of a rebellious curl, but a thoughtful Hail Mary to the Mother of all young people that they will live up to her ideals for them on this date. Now they're all set to go out.

THE RIGHT PERSON

Next, the second rule, watch the person with whom you go steady. Be choosy before having a first date with someone; be increasingly more wary the longer you two go together.

Tom seemed like such a good Catholic fellow when he and Sue started dating. But now since they have been going steady for several months, he is getting too familiar. Tom wants to hold hands all through the show, to "park" every time they date. He can see nothing wrong in a few affectionate touches, and Sue is getting worried about him.

She should!

She lightly protests his advances, but he, with the same old line that hundreds before him have used, argues: "Aren't we going steady any more? The least you can do is let me kiss you. Don't be a prude; everybody's doing it," and Tom pouts like a child and says Sue doesn't like him trying to play on her sympathy so she will give in.

The fool! If Sue really likes him, she will put her foot down right now and draw a halt to this. She likes him so much that she won't be responsible for his going to hell. However, if she weakens and gives in to him, one kiss will lead naturally to another, several encourage him to greater liberties, and almost before they realize it, serious sin has slipped into their date life.

WHAT TO DO

What is to be done? Tom and Sue should talk this over right now. They must agree to stop committing the sin at once.

If either refuses, and persists in taking these liberties which are themselves sins, or always lead to sin, then the two of them have become occasions of serious sin for each other. In that case they are then bound under pain of mortal sin not even to date each other. Tom knows that if he dates Sue tonight, he will almost certainly commit serious sin with her. Knowing that, he may not even date her. If he does, he commits a mortal sin by just going out with her for he deliberately places himself in the proximate occasion of serious sin.

You know, when we go to confession, we can't look Christ honestly in the face, tell Him we are sorry for this sin, and yet persist in dating the fellow or girl who was the cause of it. Don't try to be a hypocrite with Christ. You say you don't want to sin again; then you must give up the occasion of sin.

FOR PROTECTION

One good way of protecting themselves during the date is for Tom and Sue to have their evening planned before they go out. If they know just where they are going and what they will do, most likely they will do just that. Some people go out and park in the car because they are so intellectually deficient that they don't have the brains to think of anything better to do.

Another thing, always double-date, and with a good clean couple who will set the right example for you. Sin hates company, and rarely bothers to go along with a crowd. Never double with those whose morals are lower than yours.

PICKING THE PLACE

And thirdly, watch the places where you go. The best couple can go wrong in a dim-lit night-club with loud music and couples playing around them. Even a wooden Indian could sin, in some theatres. Be very careful of the type of movie that

you go to. There is so much good entertainment in the world, why bother with trash?

And lastly, stick to cokes and fruit drinks when on a date. They will never cause you to lower the barriers as a “spot” might, nor will they give you the false courage to sin together that three beers might give.

YOUR BEST FRIEND

You know, when Christ was on this earth, He loved young people. He worked His first miracle at Cana for a fellow and girl in love.

Today, He is just as much interested in you and your date as He was in them. Invite Him often into your social life and keep Him there by frequent confession and Communion.—for young people that means weekly.

If Tom and Sue are going to go out together frequently, why not make confession a regular stop on that Saturday night date? Why not a Sunday morning date for Mass and Communion together.

Let Christ go out on every date with you, and He will certainly do His part in seeing that you come back home with Him still in your pure heart.

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