



# VOICES

## The hug code

The main reason to read the H-Z Wednesday edition is Winter Prosapio's column. Over the years we have kept up with her children and watched her hair style change. (We have also doubted that was her real name, but we have chosen to give her literary license.)

Her most recent topic was hugging. She spoke of missing it these days because of the virus. We all do. But because we assume she is a native, and been reared on the gesture, she could not include what it is like for someone new to these parts to catch on to the techniques and intricacies of hugging. It is a learned activity.

For example, take someone from far away. Let's say a foreign chap comes here from somewhere as remote as New Jersey, marries a Texan, and homesteads hereabouts.

Let's also say he had only been hugged once before in his previous life. That was in south Camden. He later noticed his wallet was missing. That means he now approaches such encounters tentatively and suspiciously.

Arriving here he, and all other expatriates, must adapt to the ritual. It is complex. There should be classes sponsored by the school districts, chambers of commerce and civic organizations. But they do not. All of them are derelict. They have failed we immigrants.

Therefore, I shall fill the cultural gap.

Pay attention newbies. Here in the south, there is a 'Code Of Hugging.'

One begins the embrace by approaching another. The first consideration of initiation is gender determination. Whom starts it? This is important. Girl to girl is the easiest. It seems natural. Next is girl to boy which is usually initiated by the girl. That takes the pressure off a shy boy. Boy to girl can be awkward but is permissible as long as no body parts touch more than fleetingly. Boy to boy is limited to old friends and is often congratulatory such as the recipient finally bowling over 100 or catching a fish greater than a foot long.

That brings us to the entry phase. Hugs must be telegraphed. That is done through eye contact, a smile, and the proper raising of arms. The signal must be unmistakably strong. Through research and observation, I have noticed that right handers tend to bring that arm up high just under the shoulders of the recipient. Left arms enter the embrace lower, at about belt level. If commenced and positioned a meter or two distant then the other person has enough time to anticipate and repeat the pattern. Right arm high, left arm middle, eliminates conflict. Practice on a mannequin from a resale store.

Time is also regulated. About five seconds seems most common (unless of course one of the participants see a more important person across the room and breaks off suddenly).

Kissing, even up into the air, is out of the question. We are talking Comal here people; this is not California.

Infrequently there is si-

multaneously patting of the back. That is mostly a Boy to Boy when one has been promoted but could also be congratulatory such as when someone's grandchild just came in fifth at a swimming meet.

This preliminary class has only been about the basics. I am available for advanced, personal, instruction.

But don't even think about going for my wallet.

*Star Carey,  
Canyon Lake*