

I Remember...

Seventy years ago, I fell in love with my English teacher, Michael Brown.* Now 84, I still remember that fierce crush.

As a 14-year-old 9th grader I was socially awkward. Chunky with thick glasses, I was reserved, bookish, and unpopular with boys. These powerful feelings caught me unawares.

I remember like yesterday, our new teacher striding into our small New Jersey town's junior high school class. I took in his lively green eyes, wavy blond hair, and warm smile...and caught a heady whiff of his cologne. He was wearing a brown corduroy jacket with leather elbow patches, a denim shirt, red tie, and tan chinos. I later learned that he was a married 24-year-old recent Rutgers University graduate. To my younger self, his boyish charm and adult authority were an intoxicating combination.

To this day, I do not know if he was aware of my fixation, although I fear I may have been transparent. I do know that I took every opportunity to be in his orbit. Learning that he would be advising our school newspaper, the *Junior Citizen*, I promptly volunteered as its editor. Each day after classes I dashed to his office to work on the upcoming issue. Although he typically was not yet there, just being near his personal things—the rumpled jacket draped over his chair, his lunch bag—was reward enough. When he agreed to chaperone our class boat trip, I was thrilled. Back in [1950] students and teachers could innocently dance together, and we shared one foxtrot. At home, I talked about him so much that my dad finally snapped, “Enough already!”

The years passed. Mr. Brown went on to become Superintendent of Schools. And as for me? Four years later, I met The One. My real love, Ira, was smart, tall, blond and sexy. He is now 86, and my cuddler-in-chief and I have been married over 62 years. We raised three children together, are grandparents to ten, and great-grandparents to eight. While I still remember the teacher who was my first heartthrob, it was Ira who taught me what true love is.

*pseudonym