

BLACK AND WHITE OF DAD'S EARLY TWENTIES BIRTHDAY

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MOM, HANDS IN HER LAP, WEARS AN EYELET MIDRIF HALTER. Seated next to Dad, maybe only his girlfriend so far, they face the camera, he in a white short-sleeve cotton button-down, the curved edge of his undershirt peeks from the v-neckline. Mom's wavy auburn hair clasped off her face with a long barrette. Dad rests a knife against a white-iced cake—his July sixth birthday.

They sit at a kitchen table covered with a cloth, checkerboard pattern interspersed with flower baskets; coffee cups, sugar and cream containers, an urn one-fourth full, a globe of Earth on a stand; table and chair legs ornately turned. A wall with layers of wallpaper peeled halfway loose looks wet and moldy. Dad once said his childhood home held a wall that iced up every winter, but I believe this is my uncle's old farmhouse.

Behind my future parents, an open wooden door and a screened aluminum one filters a breeze from the porch. It's years before air conditioning. Their foreheads shine.

Now, they're only accessible in photos. I see myself in her wide face, his thin one, their shy smiles. ∞



image credits