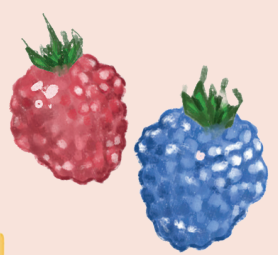


# high school hearts



## Former students look back on the long-lasting connections they made in high school

High school: four foundational years where adolescents try new things, take risks and grow into the adults they want to become. While their journey might be tumultuous, support from friends helps students gain important life skills, try new things and learn a lot about themselves and others. When those four years come to an end, students leave changed for the better, excited to start a fresh new chapter in their lives.

Sometimes, relationships forged in high school last well beyond graduation day: high school experiences morph into college experiences and last far into adulthood. These kinds of friendships and relationships are unique for their timeline and for their strength, perfect examples of how lasting

during a Sophomore year history class at Gunn High School.

“We became aware of each other in a class called Contemporary World [History], which was a current events class,” Johnson said. “The first time we ever interacted with each other was when we both signed up to present a news story to the class.”

Neither partner wanted to spend a lot of time on the project, thus Johnson and Reboh aimed for the quickest possible strategy.

“I said, ‘why don’t we both look up news stories, and on Monday let’s just choose which one to do,’” Johnson said. “When Monday came around, it turned out we had both chosen the same newspaper article.”

Despite the awkward coincidence of choosing the same story, Johnson and Reboh did not interact much afterwards until fate brought them together again during the next semester.

“We ended up in the same English class,” Johnson said. “[Reboh] was sitting next to me and seemed to know a lot of people that I knew. It kind of drew me into her orbit, and that’s when I started to get to know who she was a little bit more.”

The two interacted more over the course of sophomore year, occasionally talking as they left class or passed one another in the hallways. As summer approached, Johnson wanted to see Reboh more so he asked her the question that had been lingering on his mind.

“I built up the courage [to ask Reboh out], but I struggled,” Johnson said. “I was so nervous, and I was thinking, ‘Oh my God, today I’m going to ask her.’ I told her, ‘I’d like to get to know you better this summer.’”

Except, there was a problem: Reboh was going away for

the summer and was also planning to study abroad for a semester in Sweden. Johnson quickly came up with a way to stay in touch with her — a completely fabricated scenario.

“He concocted a story that he collects rare postcards with pictures of food on them,” Reboh said. “So he asked me to send him some, and in reality, he’d only ever received one.”

It started with postcards. Then, Johnson and Reboh began sending letters to stay in touch during her semester abroad. Eventually, they started dating and stayed together throughout their teens and twenties, continuing to send letters in college.

“We were 34 when we got married,” Johnson said. “It was a long time of us just enjoying life with each

other.” Undergoing so much of their lives together has been a fulfilling experience for both Reboh and Johnson and has brought them closer over time.

“It’s really unique and special to know someone

who really knows you and everything about where you came from,” Reboh said. “He [Johnson] knows everything about my life and has experienced it with me.”

Despite knowing each other for so long, the Johnsons have found that they’re still learning about each other and connecting with the world around them in new ways.

“I still find [Reboh] really interesting, and I feel like I’ve known multiple versions of her over the years,” Johnson said. “I always like and love the person she is, though I don’t see her as the same person I knew in high school.”

“We’ve been growing together from the start,” Reboh said.

While some find their spark early on, it took the parents of Corbin Dodd — a 9th and 10th grade history teacher at Paly — almost a decade to establish their relationship.

“My parents actually met when they were in the seventh grade, but they didn’t start dating until they were in their junior year of college,” Dodd said.

Dodd believes that giving relationships time to grow as well as maturing individually can lead to a stronger bond later on.

“They [my parents] probably would not have been compatible at that young age,” Dodd said. “When you make a connection, [it] is really dependent on each person’s



**“There’s definitely an instant familiarity you feel with people you grew up with.”**

**Corbin Dodd, history teacher**

Paige & William



[path]. There’s definitely an instant familiarity you feel with people you grew up with that you don’t necessarily feel with people you meet later in life.”

Although attachments formed at a young age can sometimes turn into lasting romantic relationships, others remain as close-knit friendships. Paly history teacher Steven Sabbag has kept his own ties by continuing to engage with his childhood friends, whom he has always been very close with.

“I’m still in touch with many of my high school friends,” Sabbag said. “I still text everybody, especially for birthdays. A lot of these guys, I’ve known since elementary school and middle school.”

Sabbag’s bond with his friends is akin to that of siblings, sticking together and maintaining a deep sense of brotherhood.

“I can’t pull any nonsense [with them],” Sabbag said. “There’s just no wasted energy trying to be somebody you’re not. They know me better than [I know] myself, so it’s freeing in a lot of ways.”

Similar to Sabbag, Paige Hsieh, a soccer, field hockey and track and field coach at Paly, feels like her most authentic self around people that she has known for years, including her now-husband William Hsieh.

“We met in middle school,” Paige said. “We dated in middle school and then throughout high school. We broke up when we graduated high school because we wanted to establish ourselves as adults and as individuals.”

**“There’s no wasted energy trying to be somebody you’re not.”**

**Steven Sabbag, history teacher**



Aran & Jennifer

connections can impact lives forever.

Aran Johnson and Jennifer Reboh attended Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School at the same time, yet the pair exchanged their first words





After their freshman year of college, Paige and William ended up getting back together.

"It was extremely helpful for us to break up and have some time to become our own people because when we got back together, we liked our individual selves so much more," Paige said.

She believes that growing up and exploring adulthood together has helped them both strengthen their relationship and discover who they are as individuals.

"As we adapt and change, we have learned a lot of life skills together," Paige said. "Not having to explain your life story to someone because they were with you along the way is very special."

The extended family of Emily Tang, a junior at Paly, is home to many pairs of high school sweethearts. For Tang, one of her fondest memories is the engagement story of her cousin, Steven Hua. Steven decided to center the proposal around his girlfriend Shannon's love for his family dog, Lily, and the game "Pokémon Go."

"The way that [Steven] set up the proposal was

that they were going to the park to play 'Pokémon Go,'" Tang said. "He told Shannon that they were going to drive around to the park and catch Pokémon."

When they got out of the car, Shannon saw Lily with her leash tied to a tree and a new heart-shaped collar. According to Tang, Steven had to play dumb so as not to spoil the surprise and said they should check if it really was their dog.

"They walked up to Lily and checked her dog tag, and the tag said, 'Will you marry me?'" Tang said.

Tang has witnessed first-hand the everlasting bonds that can form during high school and in the earlier years of life. Whether building friendships or experiencing a romance, fostering a relationship together is rewarding in many ways.

"High school is a time where you really grow into yourself, and you pick up on habits that shape who you are and who you become," Tang said. "If there's someone who can stick with you through all that, that's really special."

**"It was a long time of us just enjoying life with each other."**

**Aran Johnson,  
Gunn graduate**



**Lily**



**Aran & Jennifer**



**Sabbag (& friends)**



**Lily's collar!**



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