Beaming Teenage

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“Time is like…” I’m quoting, for a class of mine, a poem that Nancy Becker wrote in our sophomore year of high school, I’m intending to use it to demonstrate cliché, when out the door I see my colleague in philosophy E.F. approach, so wan, so five-eleven skim-milk wan, in the half-here, half-in-the-radiant-universe ambient float of his signature walk now at the sixth of his eight chemotherapy sessions meant to address the lymphoma in him, and so he undoes the metaphorical lock of this literal moment, and it all floods (that would be the key word) over the banks of realization, Andy’s partner wasting from his stocky frame like a figure of snow, and Donna-and-Dennis’s seventeen-year-marriage jolting speedily toward the exit ramp, and of course the story this morning of their dragging the river for something that no longer resembles the beaming teenage boy in the top-of-the-column photo, and I don’t mean to say that change is always measured in damage, no, my nephew the precocious five-year-old is now my nephew the precocious backpack wanderer of the world in all of its multi-hued striated variations, and although I have composure in front of my class I’m also on my knees inside my brain and asking Nancy Becker for forgiveness, she with her charming fussy “pixie cut” and ulcerated colitis and crushes on foolish impossible guys and lavender notebooks, you were right all along as you tore out a page and wrote it down and submitted it to the friendly eye of Reflections, our high school literary journal in equally lavender 1965 mimeograph smudged ink, you were so exact and generous in reminding us “like a river flowing.”