

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

There are seminars to tell you how to angle the umbrella, or how to pose their hands or head. A large part of me fights against memorizing those conventions. A large part of me thinks they are rubbish.

The whole key to being good at photography, and making portraits look like they weren't taken at a department store, is to be different. I see hundreds of photos taken the same way. It's when I see something new — a refreshing angle, different lighting — that I stop to look. Using creativity is necessary to making a portrait look fresh, especially when the medium of portraiture seems narrow in focus.

Places will teach you how to use light stands, how to bounce light with a flash. I think it's just to spite them that I take more photos with natural light, like sun from a window. The subject then has a window sill to lean against and look comfortable on and the light is less harsh, since it is inherently diffused from the curtains and the surroundings in the room. After achieving natural lighting, the window here plays two additional roles: That of an intriguing background and that of a prop. A background can be something other than shades of gray, and it will look more natural (the subject will even look more natural when they have something to rest their arms on).

The best poses for people in portraits are usually the ones the subject comes up with, for they



Brad



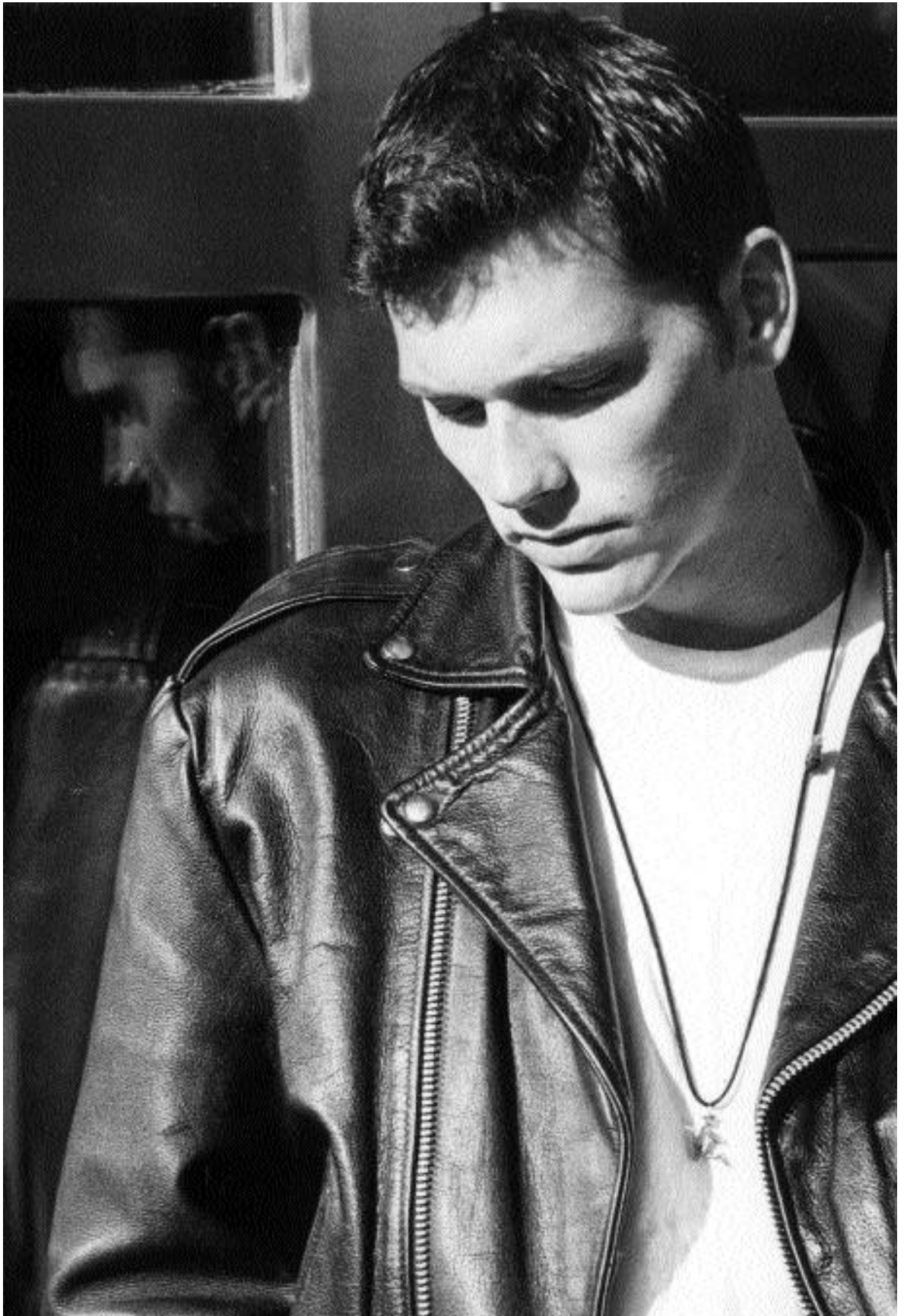
are the ones they will feel the most natural with.

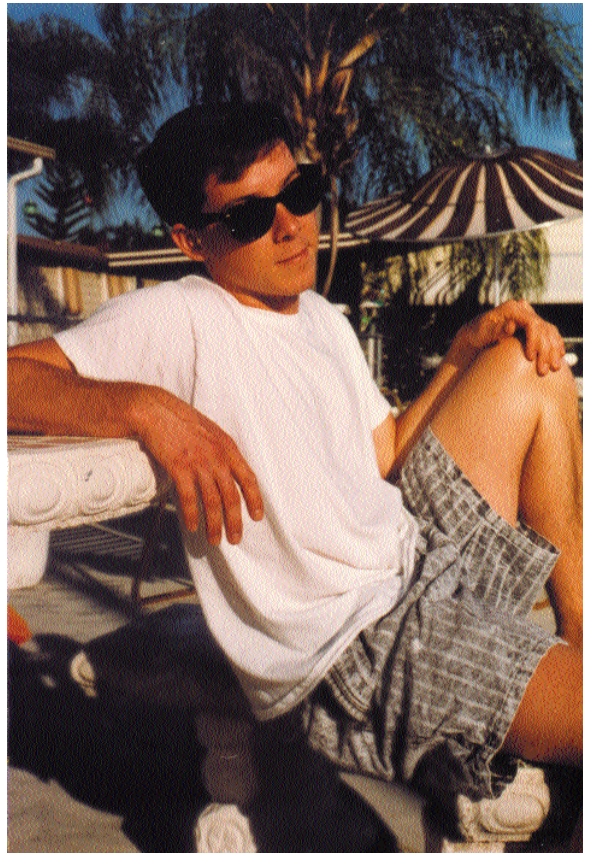
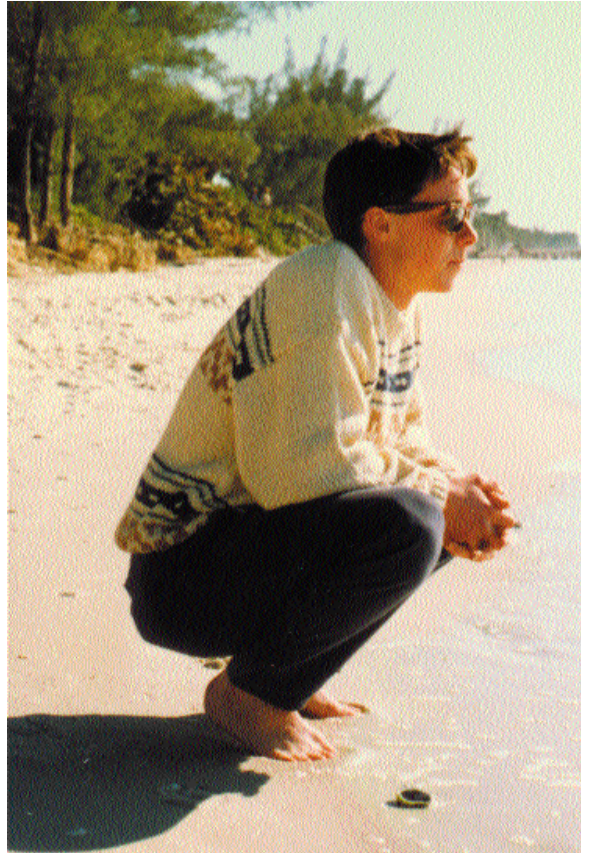
Unless they don't feel natural with you. Often the subject is nervous, tense; I have found that the best way to combat that is by first bringing them to the place you're taking the photos at, and then talking to them for a while. You can make them comfortable by paying some attention to them, and not just if there are any wrinkles in their clothes. You're taking pictures of a genuine person, and as soon as you start talking to them, their body language will become more relaxed, they'll cross their arms over the tree branch they're leaning on, and they'll look perfect for the first photo. Just pause in the sentence, reassure them to stay in place, and shoot one or two. The rest is easy.

When taking the time to get to know your subject, it is easier to find a more personal side to them. A photo should make the viewer feel they know the person. Moving close on the subject can help, for example. I've often taken photos so close to the subject that the sides and top of the hair were cut off in the photo. Compositionally, the hair frames the photo as well as the face, and because there is nothing else in the picture, there's nothing to distract the viewer.

It is important to make sure the background compliments them, fixing the fold in their shirt, adjusting the angle of their head — but that all can come only after the subject is willing. And by willing, I mean totally comfortable with letting you into their lives. Photography, and portrait photography, is a voyeuristic art form. For the best images, the subject needs to want you there.









David





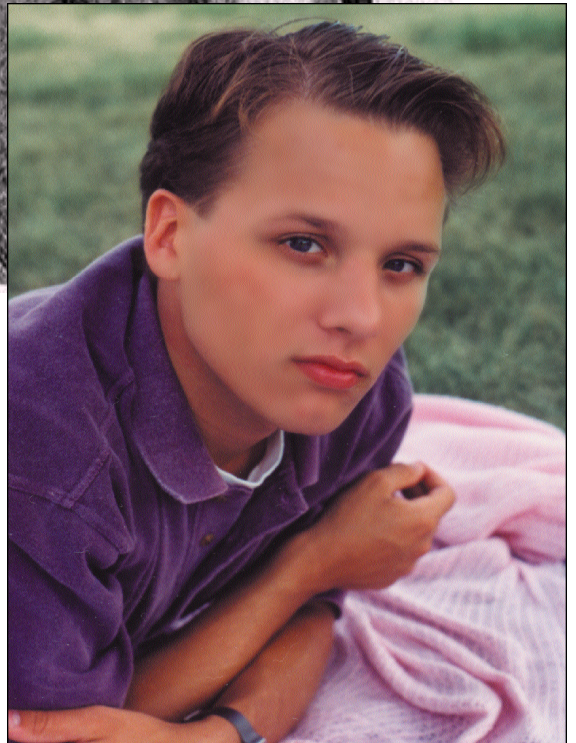


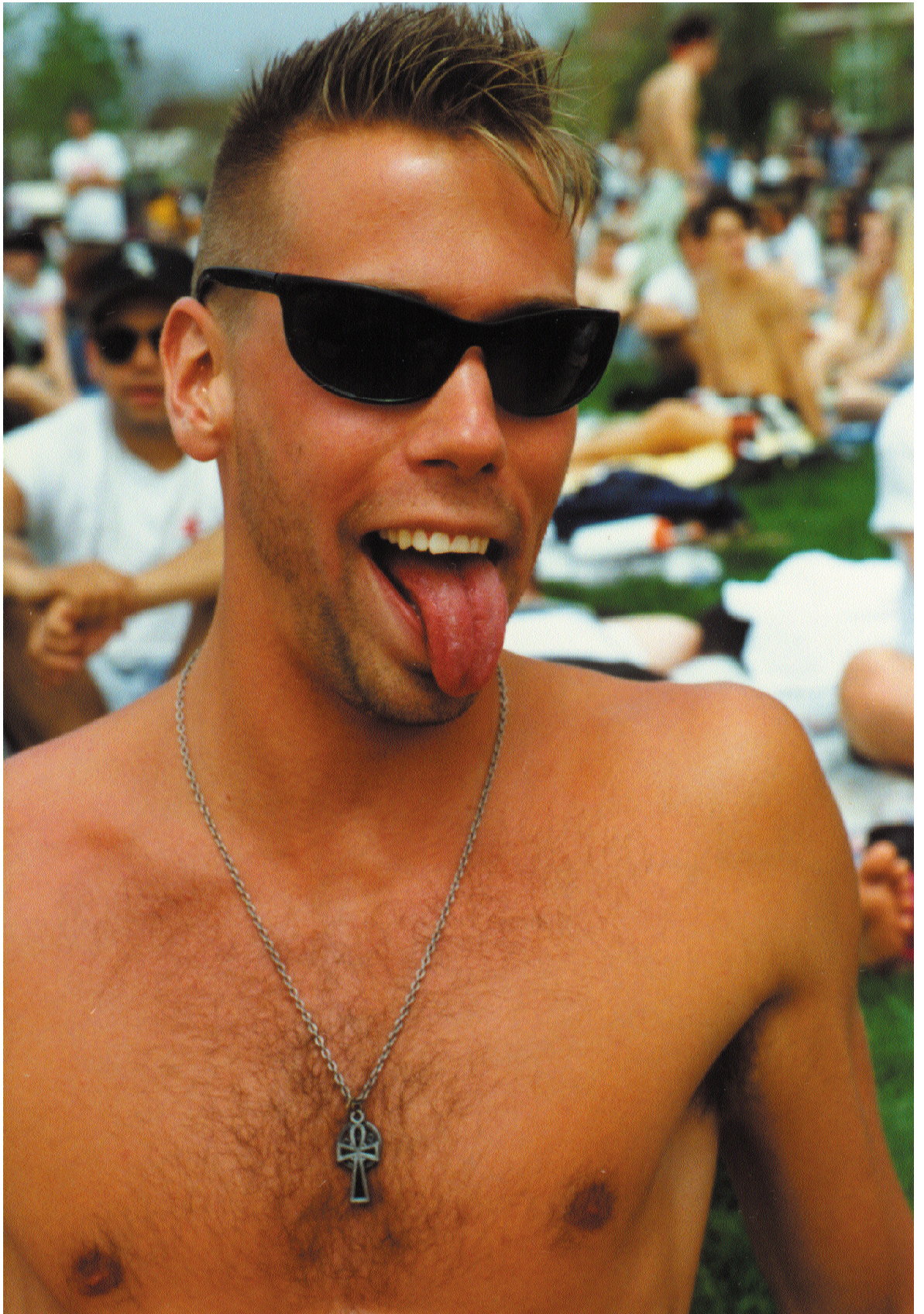




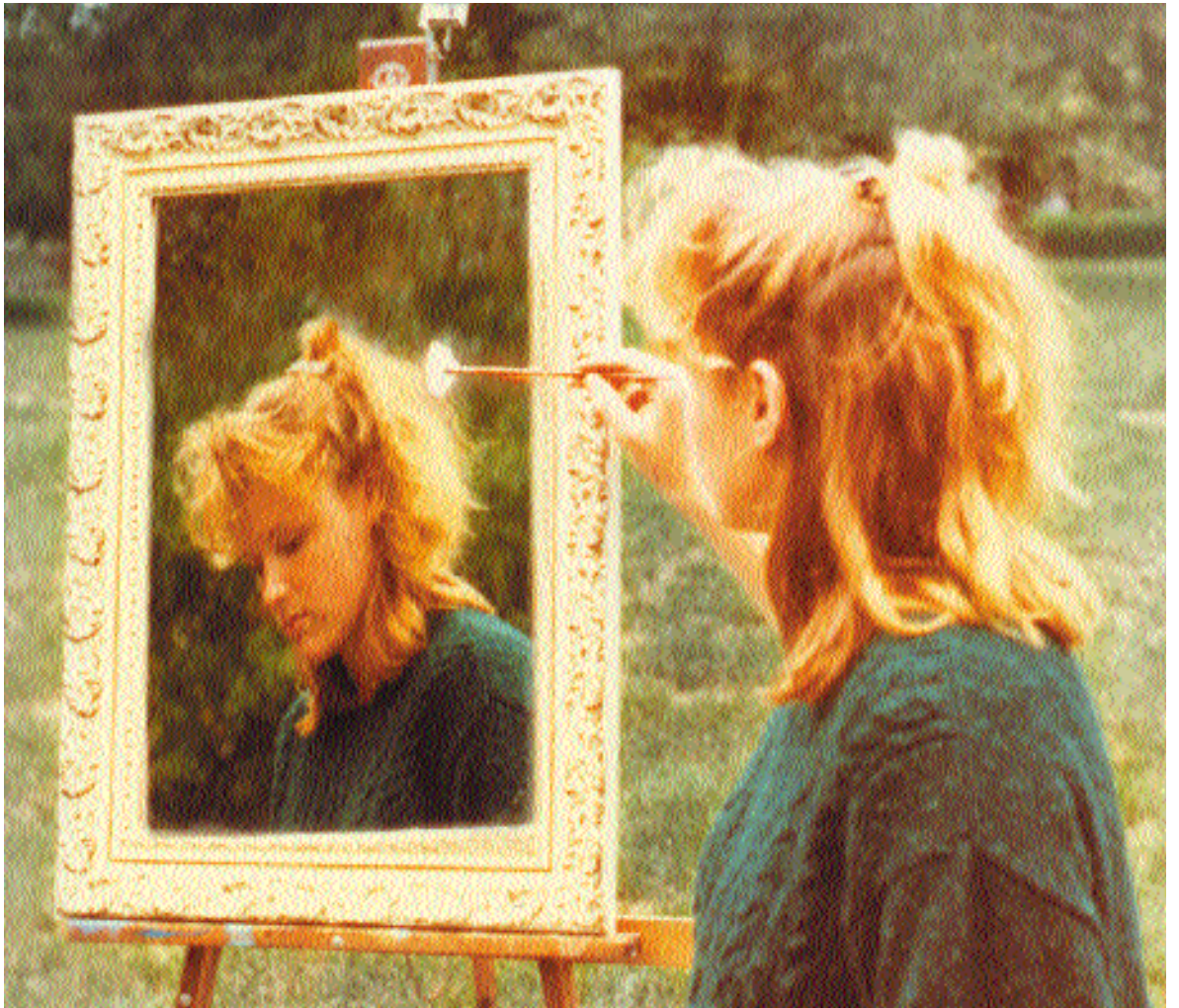


Chad, including a painted portrait





"Dog-Tag Man"





Ellen



Sandy,  
Brian  
& Dave.  
Opposite:  
Ellen.



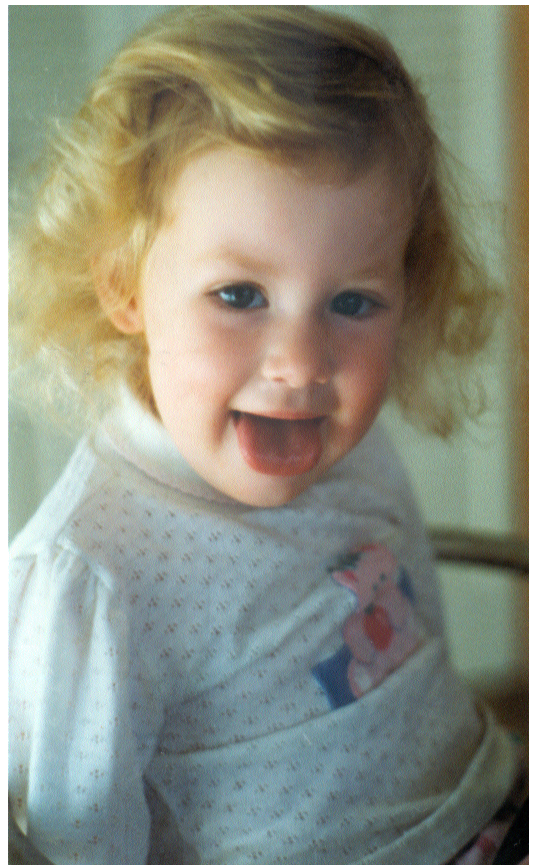




Joel.





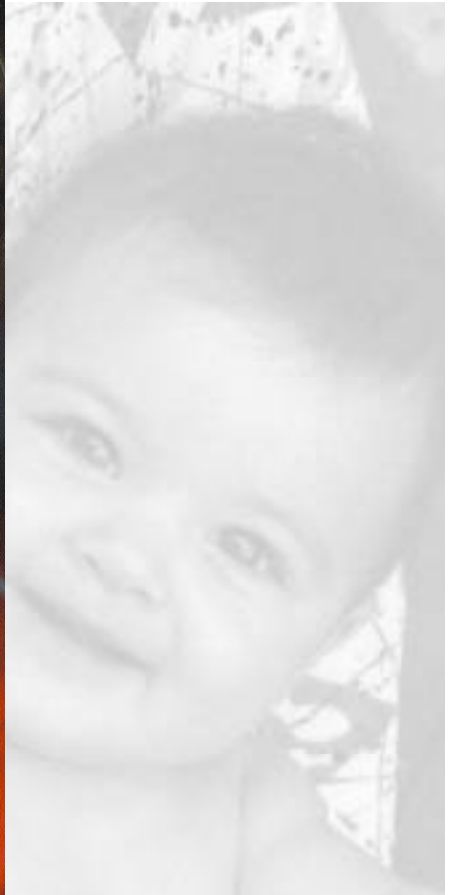


Joel  
& Claire

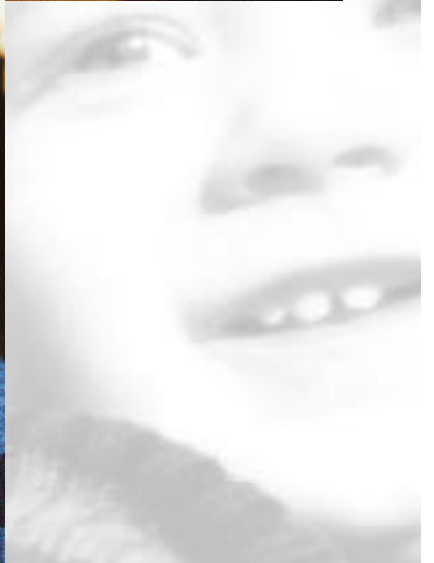


Matthew, Claire & Joel





Edward (left two images) & The Gemar's infant son



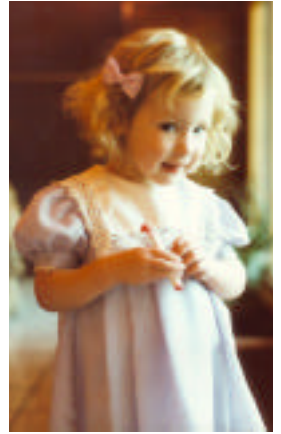
David



Claire



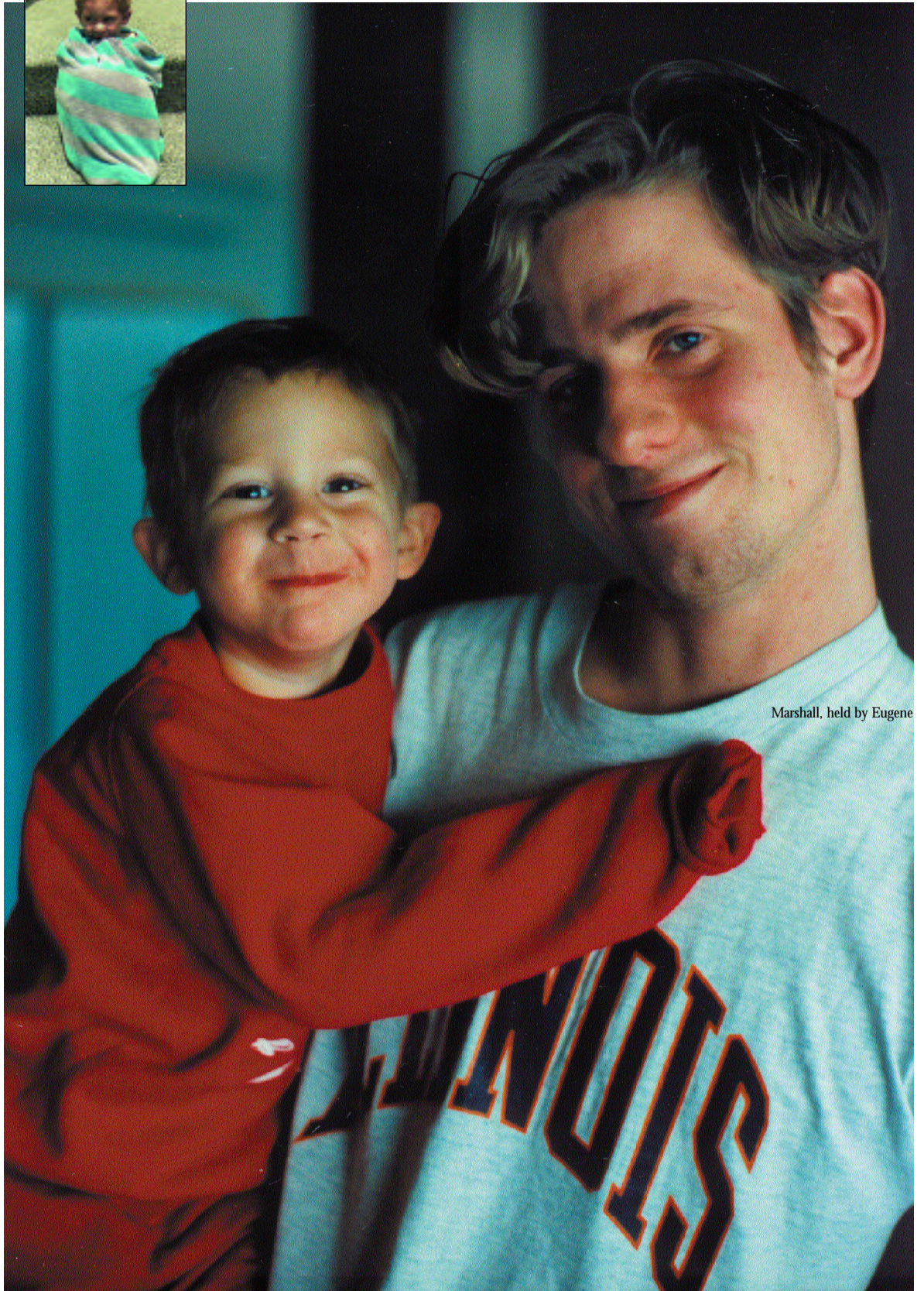
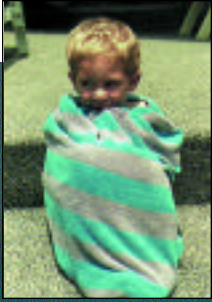








Judy and Bob, holding Marshall.  
Two small photos of Claire &  
Marshall. Bob holding Marshall

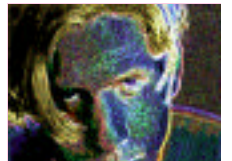
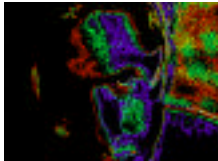
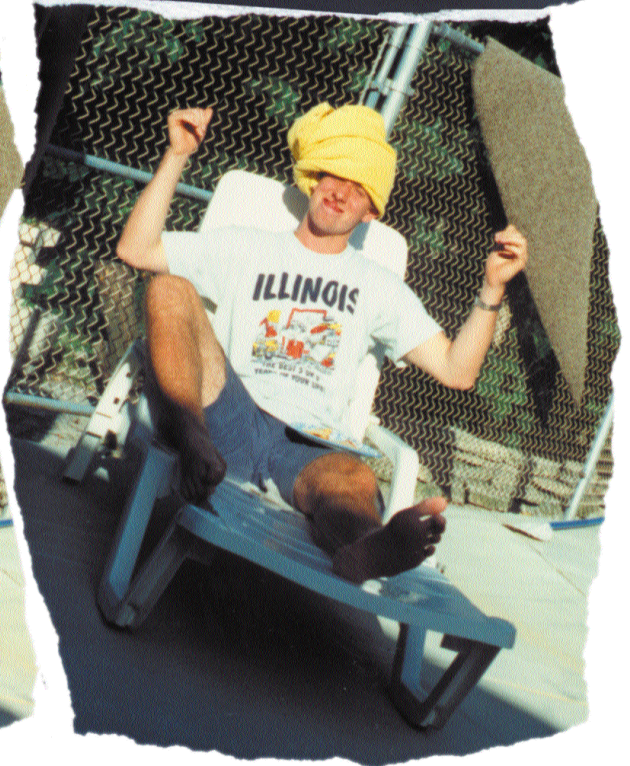
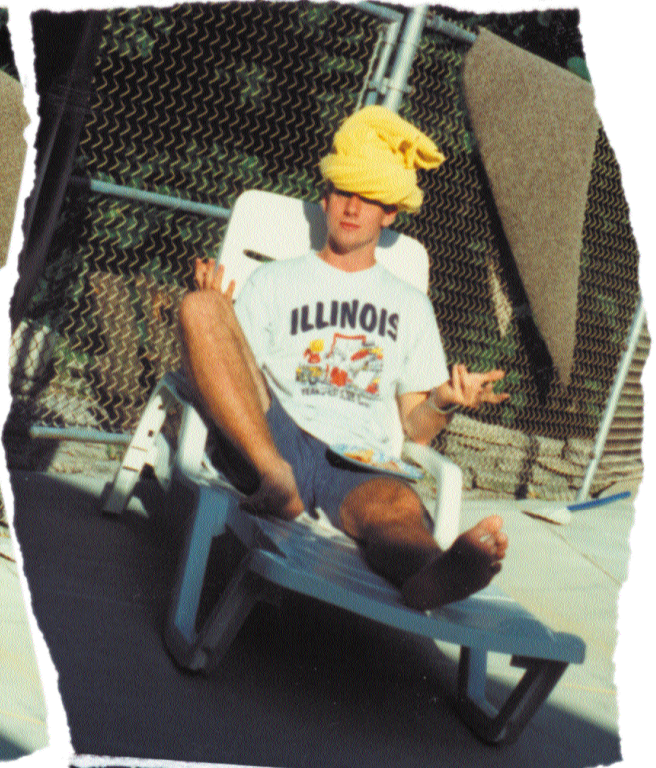
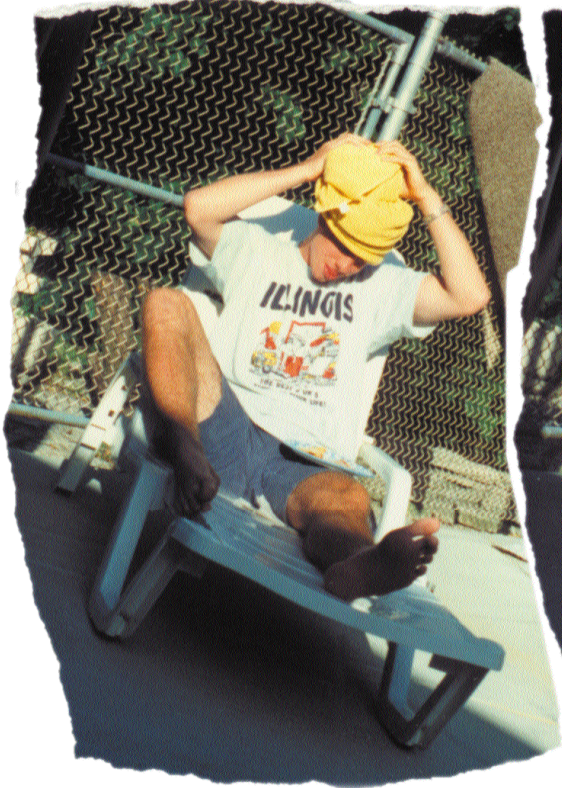


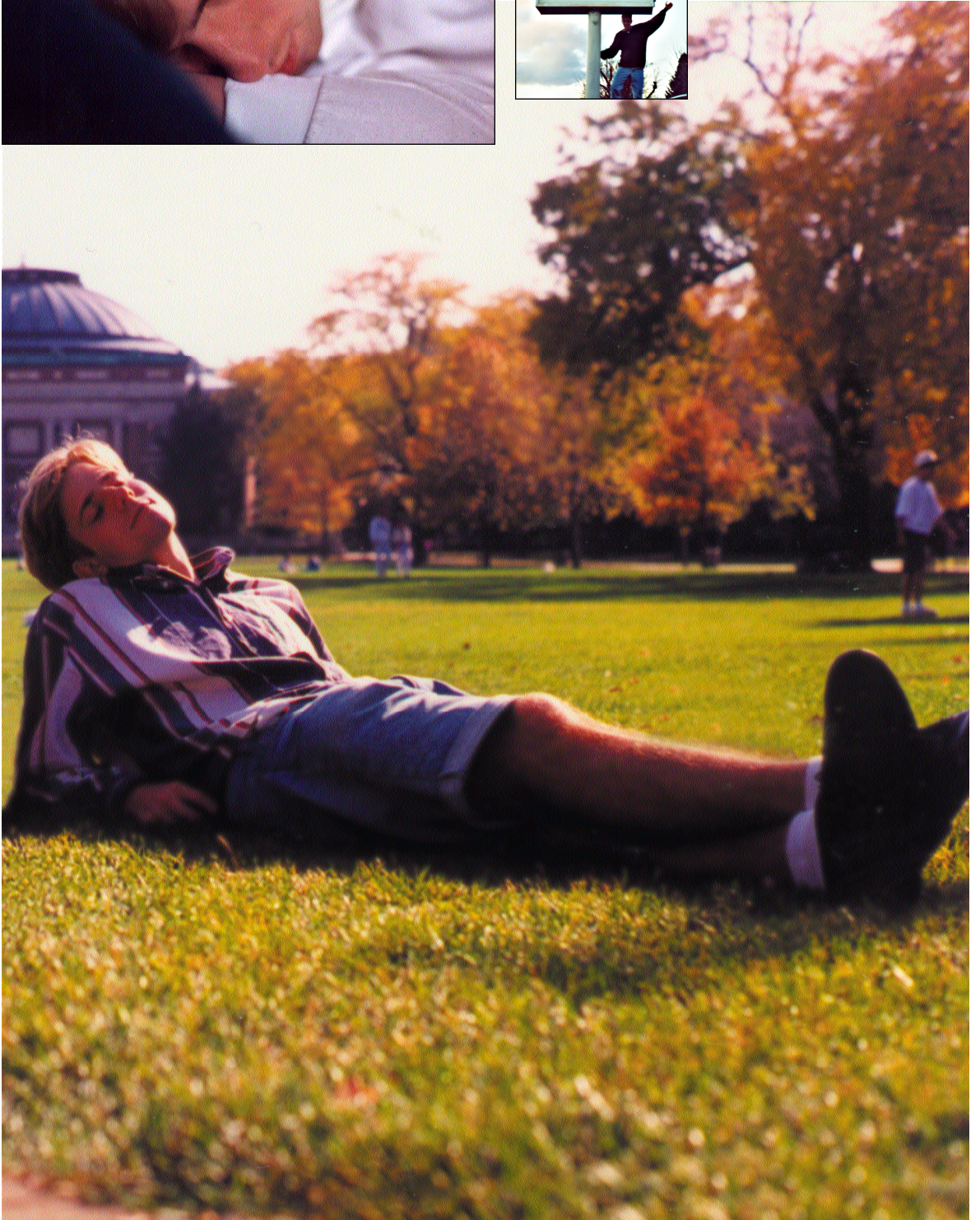
Marshall, held by Eugene





Eugene







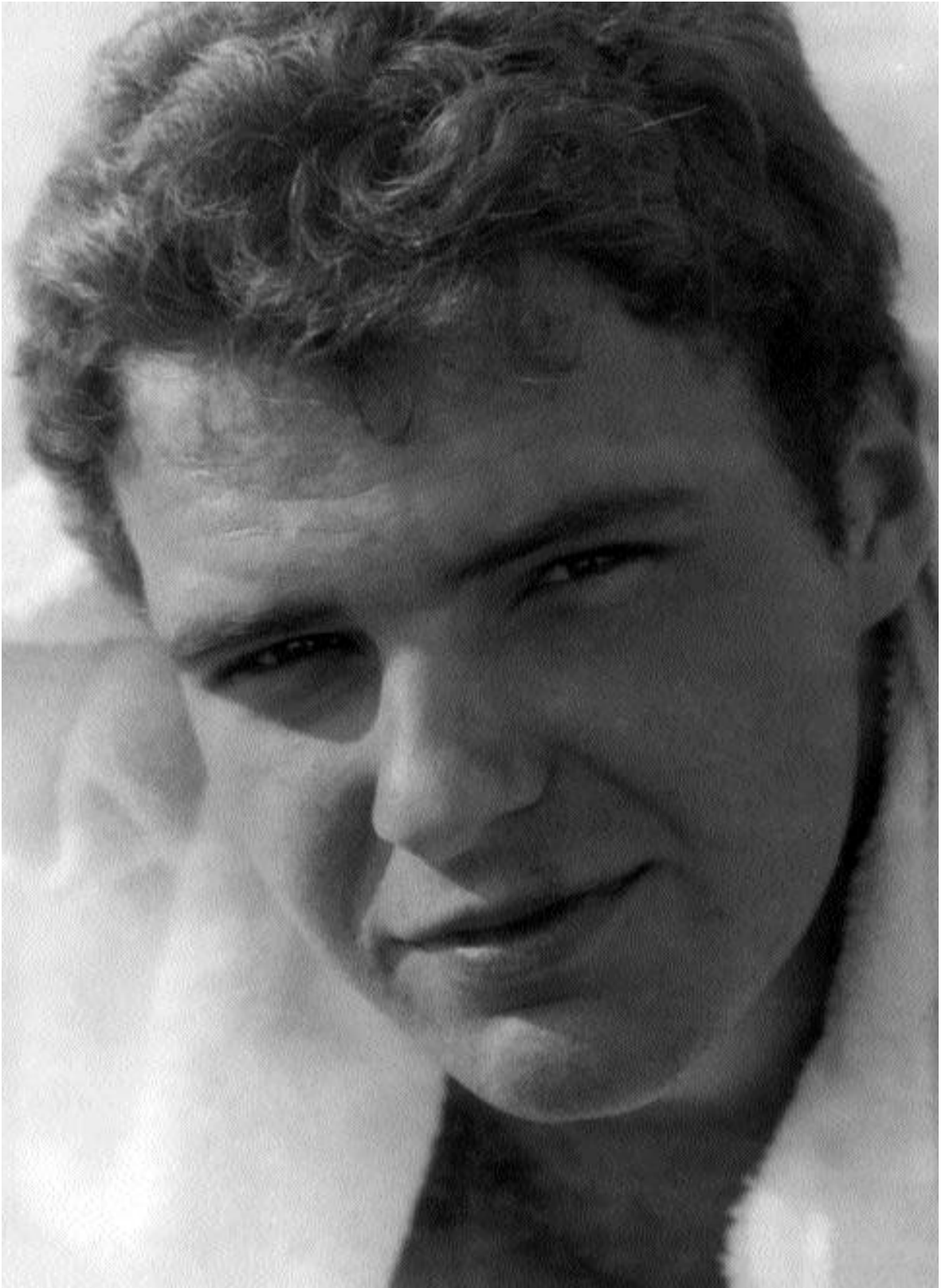


Rich

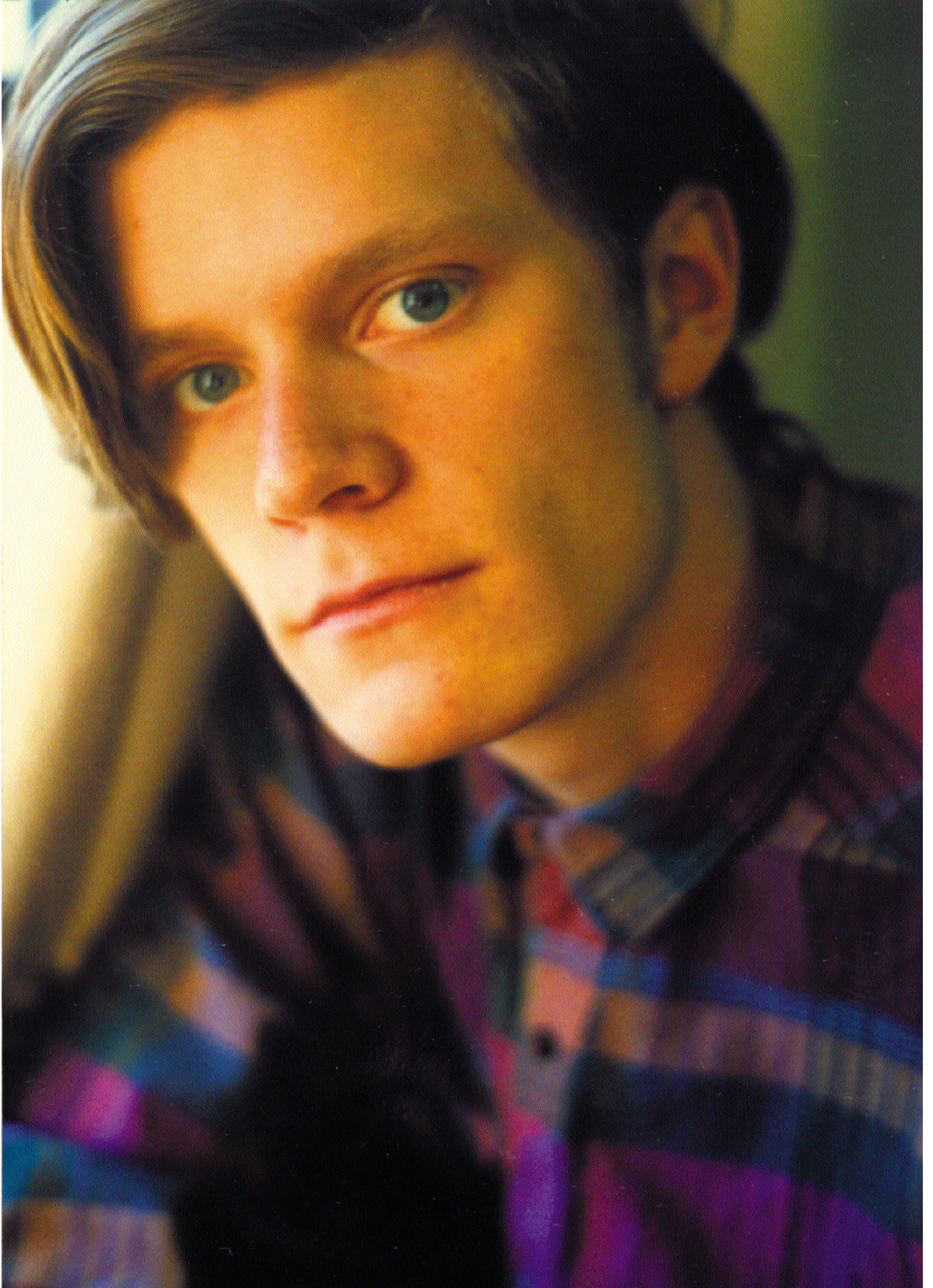




"Operation Snowball" talent show humor

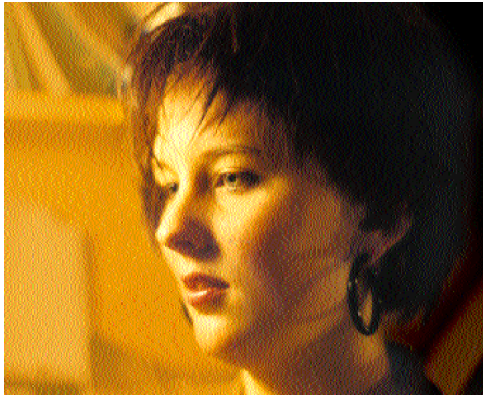


Matt, Michigan

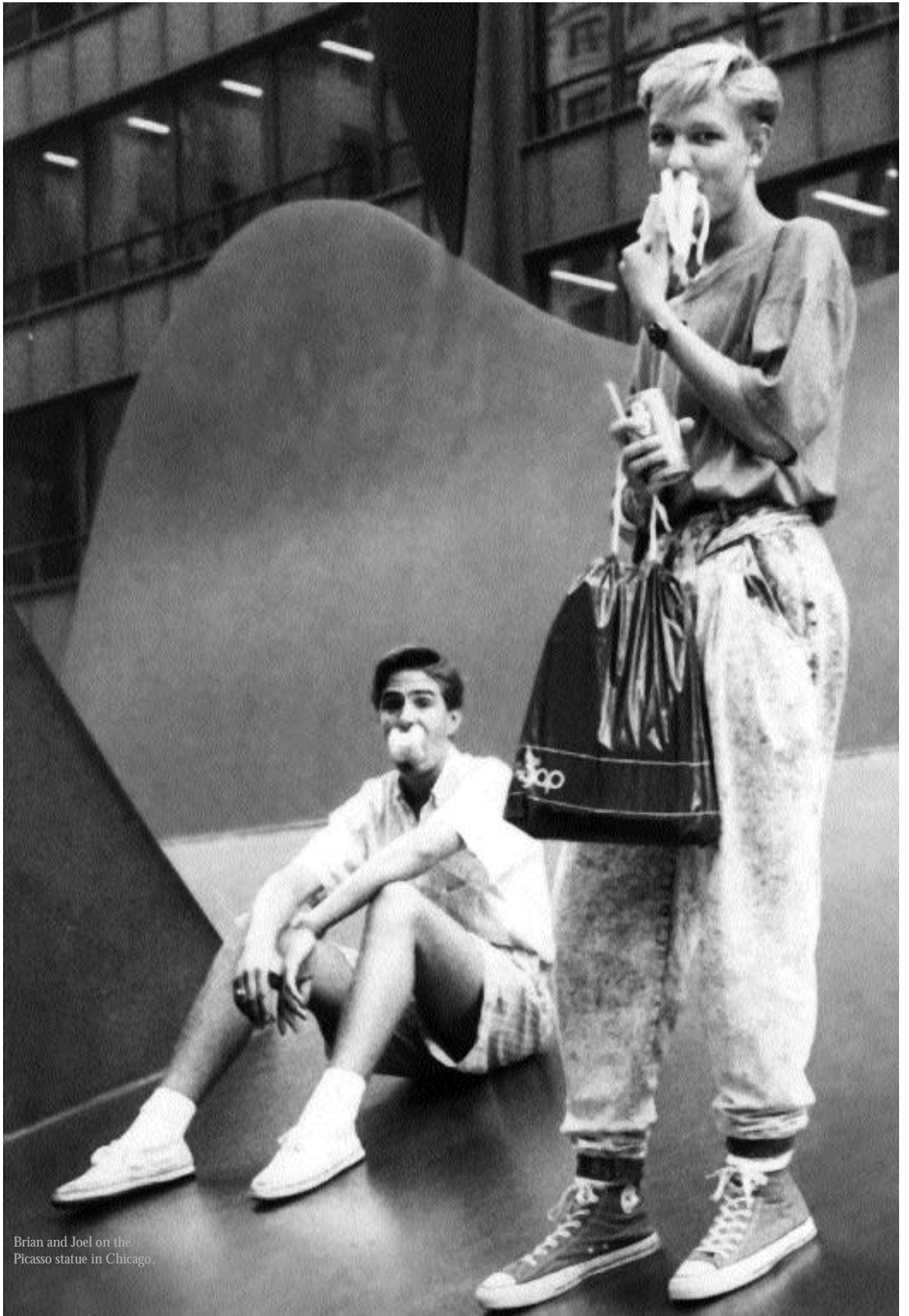




Cathy and her boyfriend. Inset photos: Lisa, Lori, Toby and Sandy.



Ada and Jen and Lisa and Ellen. Elsa. Joel and Kevin. Gigi's wedding, where everyone gave her "toast" for her toast.



Brian and Joel on the  
Picasso statue in Chicago.





Top: friends playing at another friend's house. Below: Vince and Rob.

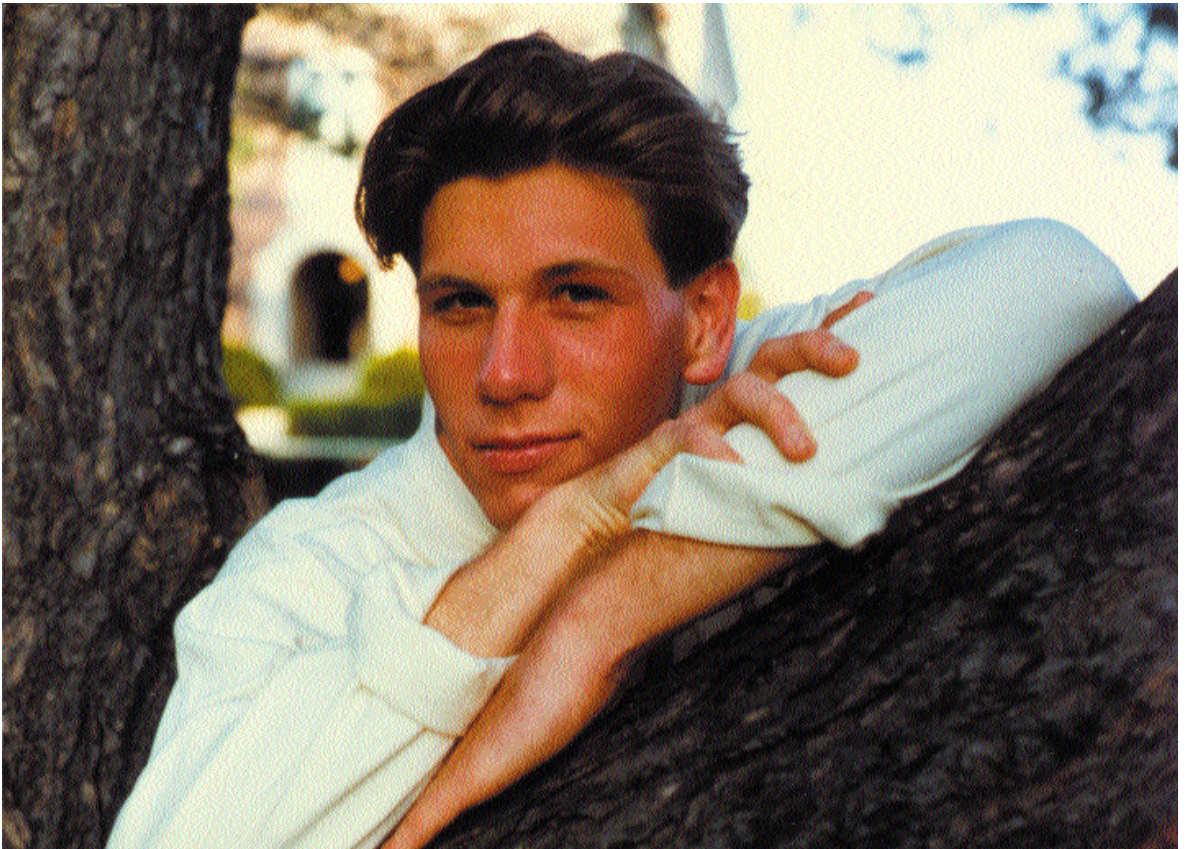




Kathy.



Joel.





Michael Stipe, Doug (drawing), and Danny. Opposite: Doug.

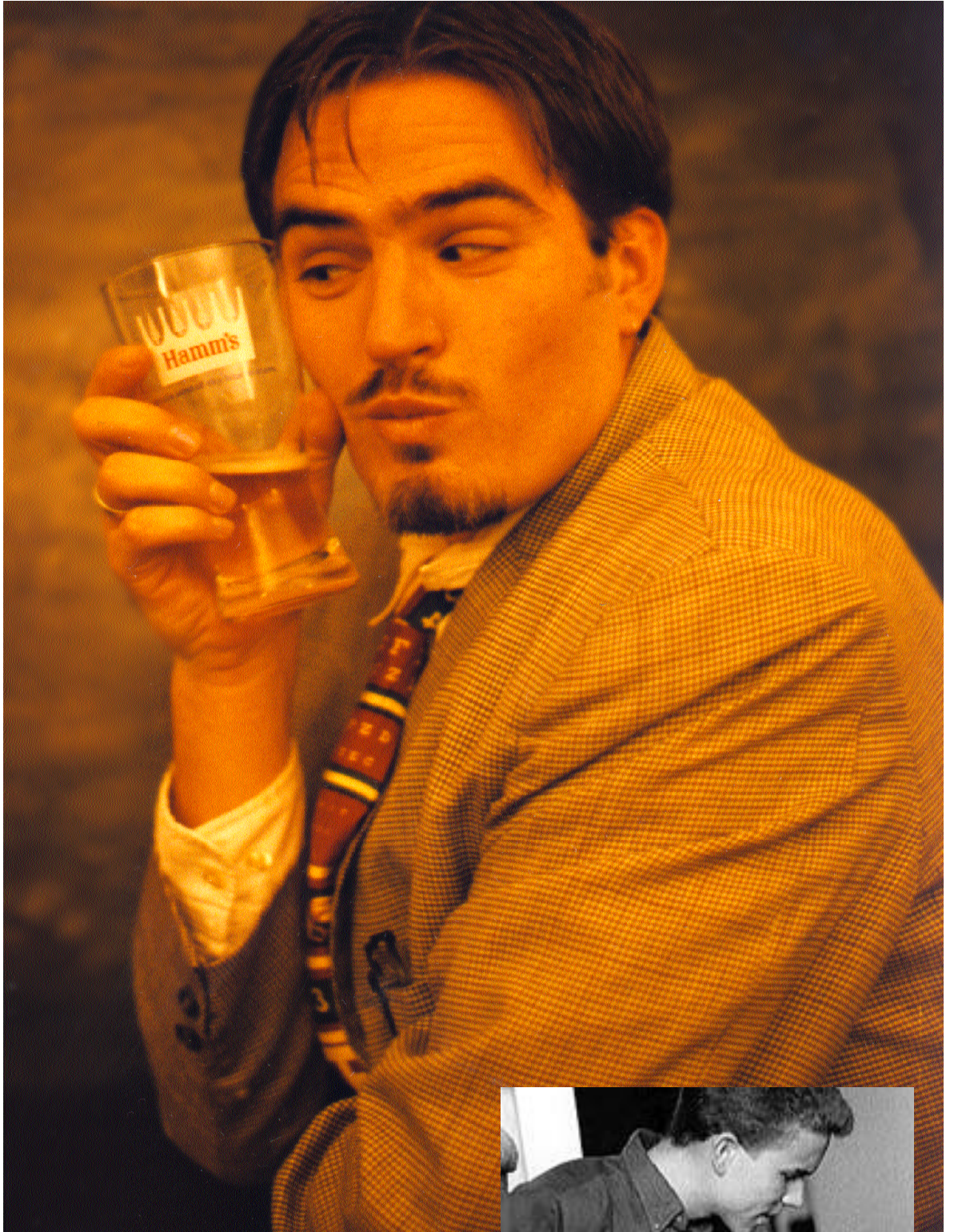






Top: Brian.  
Bottom left: Rachel and  
her "date" at a Prom party,  
wearing broccoli corsages.  
Bottom right: Elsa.





Right: Brian playing the guitar







Tracy

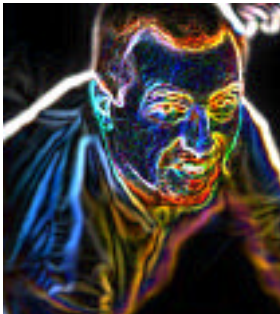
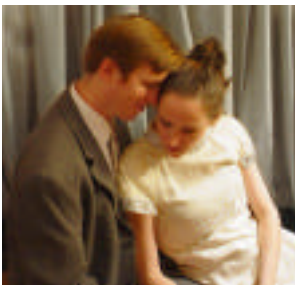


Vicki.









John











Dave and Cigi,  
Ariane and Kim.

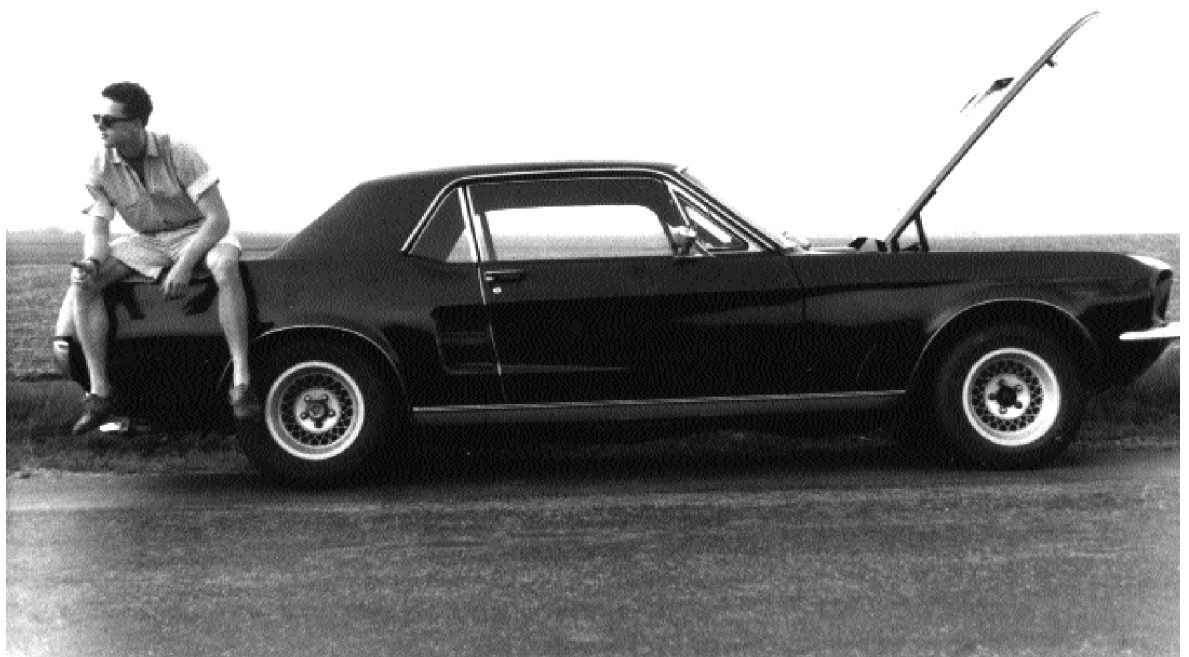




Tara.



Eric, Toby, and Joe selling his Mustang.





Denise (top),  
and Kim, Jeff  
and male friend





Dawn.













Rich and Dawn.

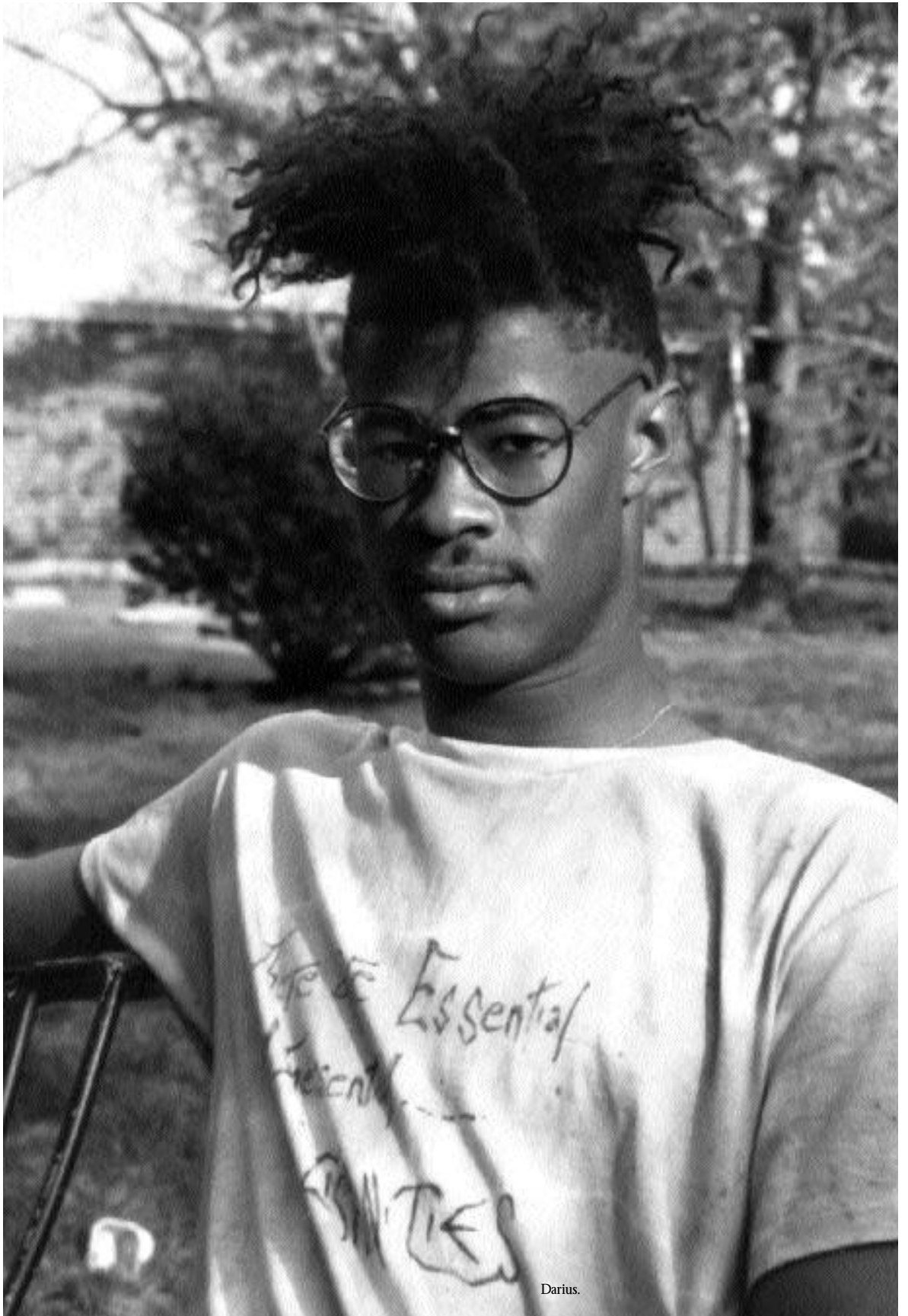


Jeff and Dawn.



Top: Brian and Eli. Bottom: Tony. Opposite: Darius.



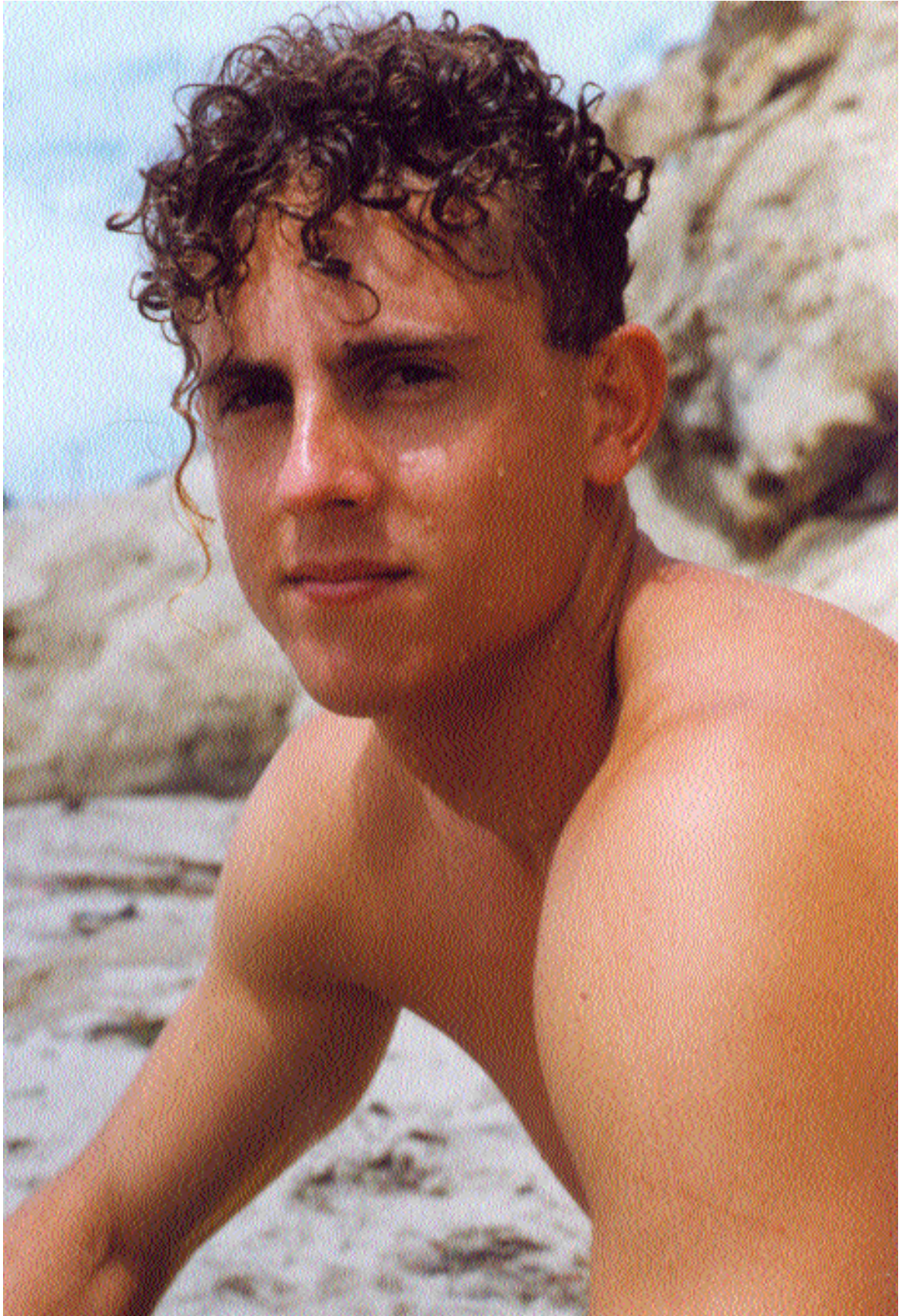




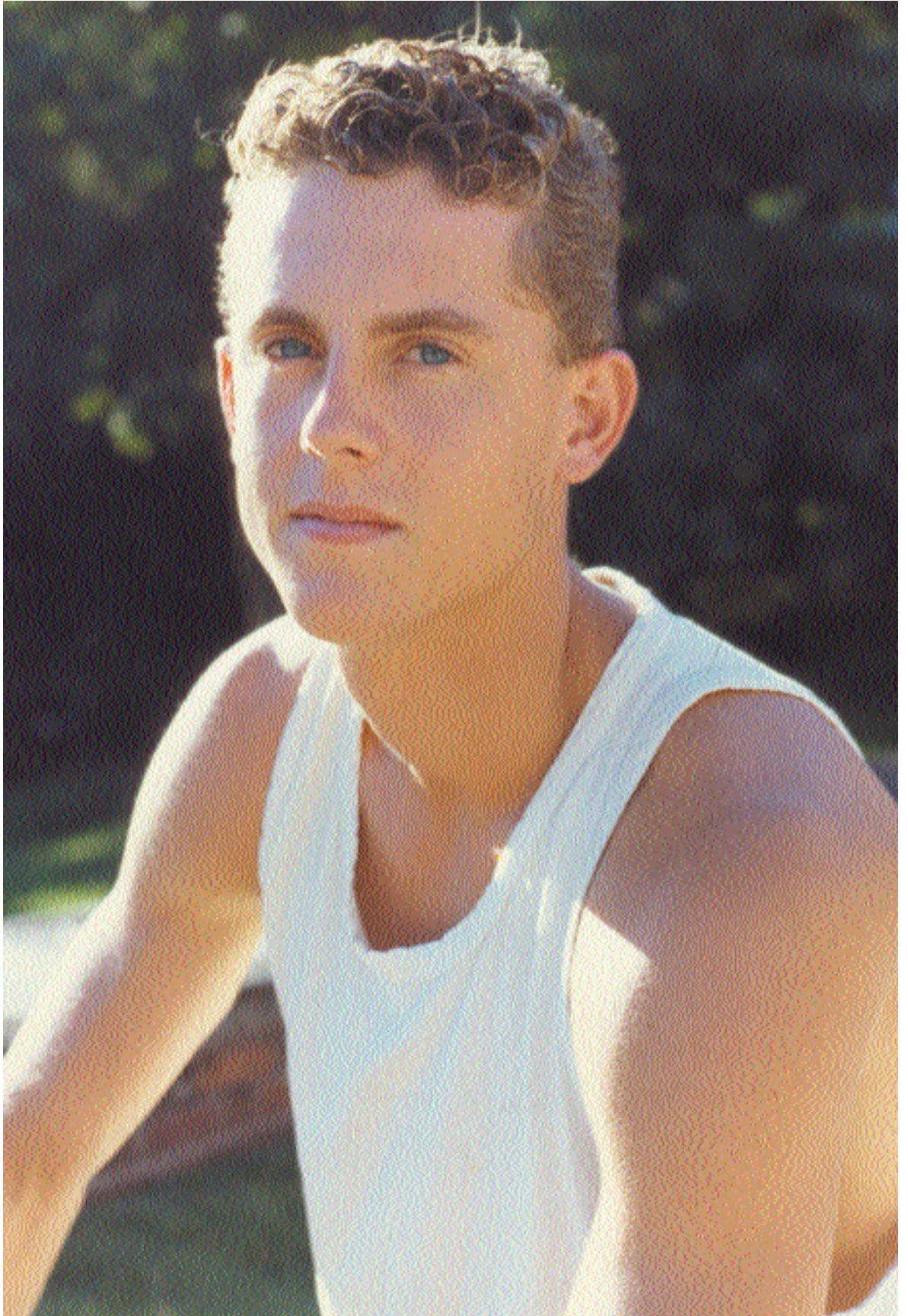


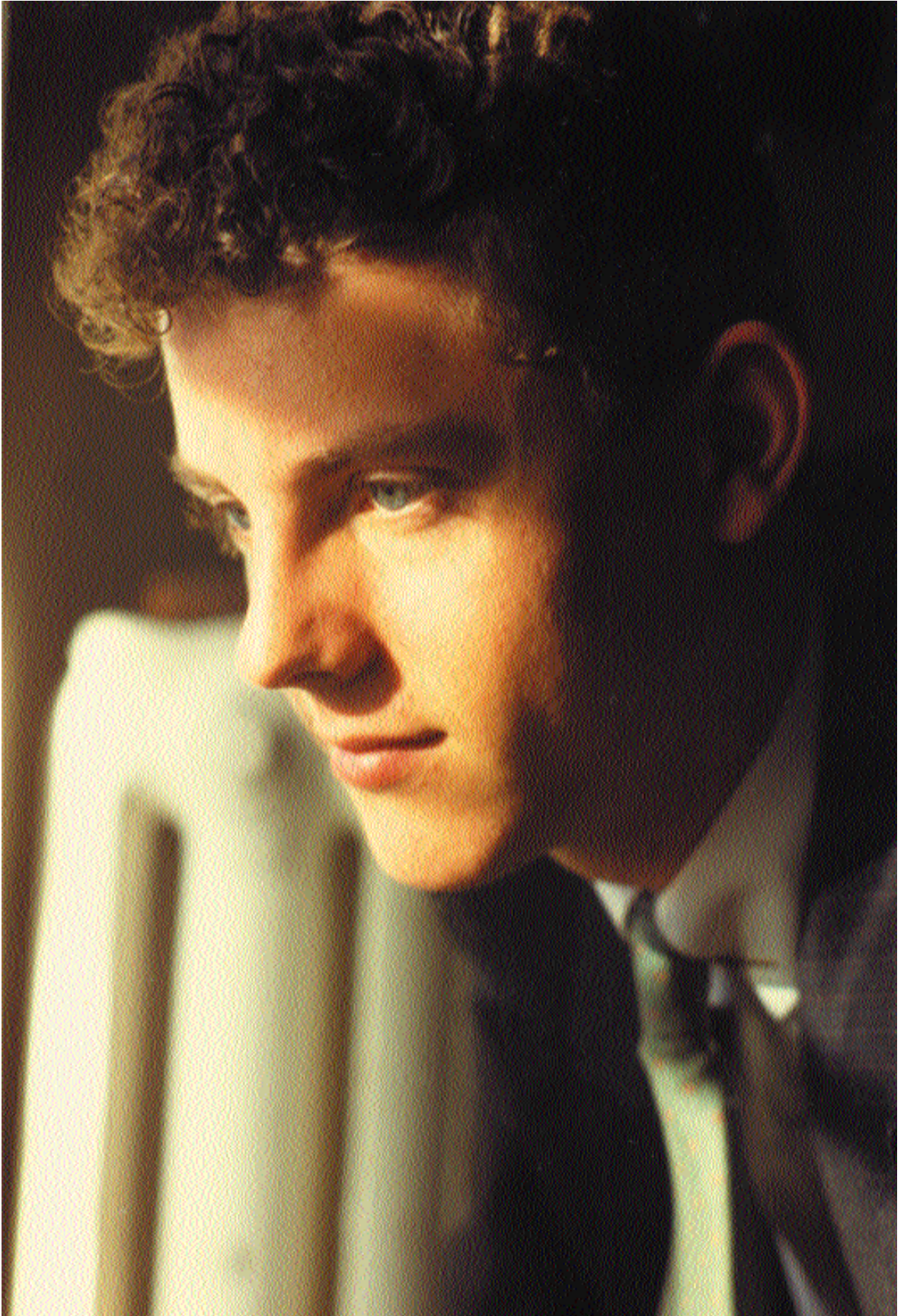
This page: Joe and Rick. Next pages: Joe.

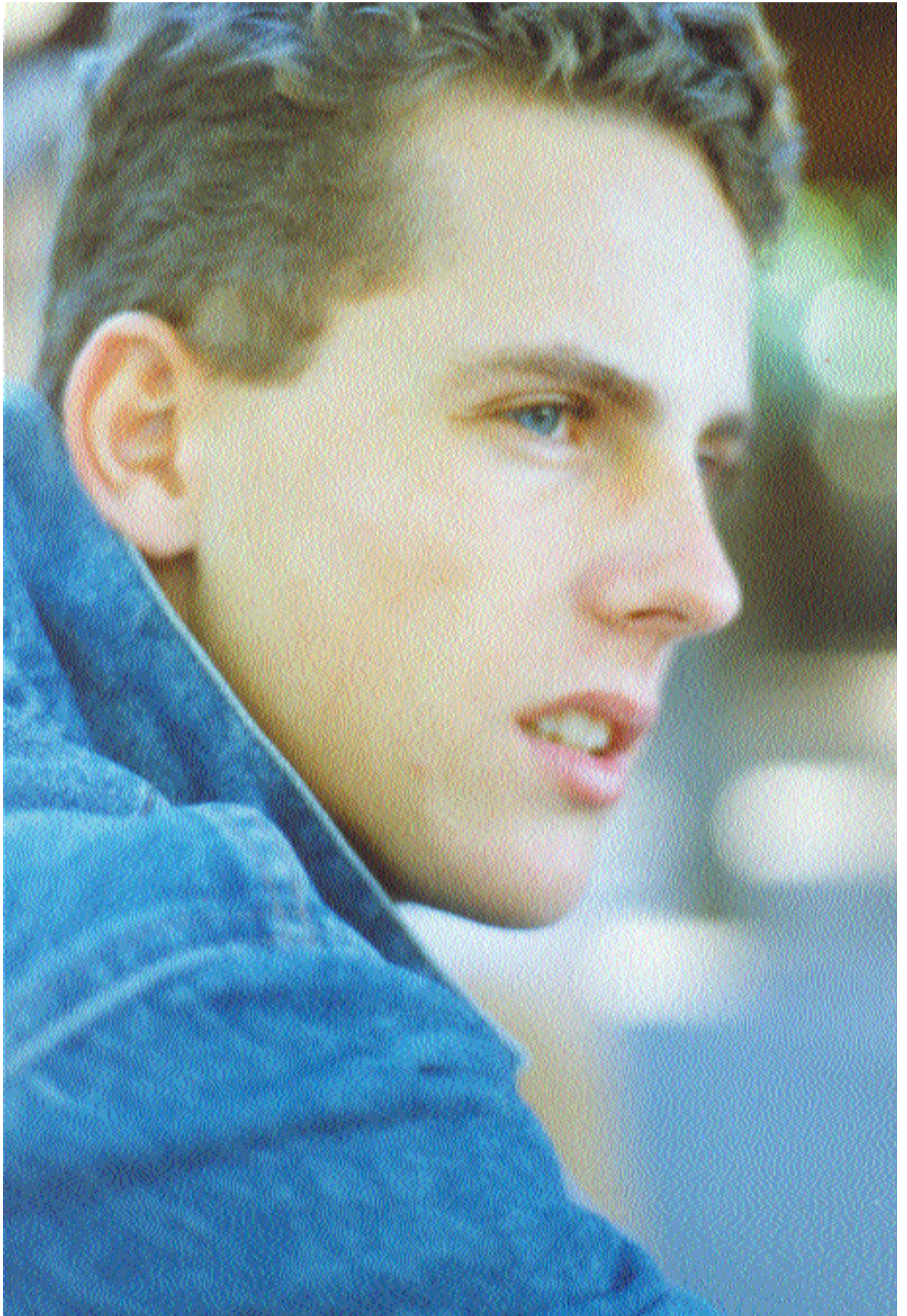
















Jocelyn.





Image immediately below: Dawn.  
Remaining images: Jocelyn.









Sheri.