

A case of love: an engagement story in the classroom

An unusually engaging discussion: Love in Len Rubinowitz's classroom

"I have a question": A law school love story for Valentine's Day

One day in the early 1990s, Professor Len Rubinowitz received a phone call during office hours from a man who introduced himself as Marc Mettes. Marc had just been admitted to Northwestern's School of Engineering, and he was calling about a student of Rubinowitz's, Linda Dupont.

Linda and Marc had been dating long-distance since she left to study law at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. As they had planned, he would be coming in from Ohio to visit her. Linda and Marc had met while working in Ohio at General Motors, hanging out as a part of a group of recent college graduate transplants. Linda decided to pivot from engineering to law and attend Northwestern, her longtime dream. Marc would soon be joining her. She had entertained thoughts of possibly living together, but he had another idea.

If he could, Marc wanted to propose in Rubinowitz's Law and Social Change class, which Linda talked about endlessly when they chatted on the phone.

"I, of course, fell off my chair, and when I recovered, I gave him a plan," says Rubinowitz today. He taught the class RB 140 in the Rubloff Building. "It's a classroom where the doors are at the very back of the room, and the main seats sit forward and hold a hundred people." It had been over 30 years since Rubinowitz had proposed to his own wife, but he had an idea, suggesting that Mettes slip into the back of that room a couple of minutes before class ended.

Per Rubinowitz's advice, at the end of class, Mettes raised his hand after he crept into the classroom and stood near Linda. "When I called on him, I said, 'Marc, did you have a question?'"

Today, Linda remembers being confused at first as to why Marc was interrupting her class instead of waiting for her like normal. She thought, "What is he doing? Couldn't he wait for me to get done with class?"

Marc told Rubinowitz, "Yes, I have a question for Linda. Will you marry me?" In Rubinowitz's memory, there was total silence "for what seemed like an eternity but was probably five seconds. And then the whole class kind of broke out in applause and laughter."

"The whole class is erupting, and I'm still confused," remembers Linda Mettes (JD '94). "I'm like, 'What is going on?' until people prodded me like, 'Yeah. You're supposed to answer.'" She said yes.

Today, after a brief retirement, Linda practices patent litigation in Detroit for various clients. She says that the sense of camaraderie she felt while at the Law School was something she looked for as she built her law career—which may be why her and Marc's son Jared applied to (and was admitted to) Northwestern Pritzker Law himself. "I think I'd always talked just so positively about my experience at Northwestern. Being in an environment where you're around super smart people, you're learning at a

very high level, but you can still have sort of that support system.” Jared Mettes (JD ’27), influenced by his parents, is an engineer interested in pursuing patent law. They look forward to visiting him and walking along the lake like they did as young lovers.

Linda and Marc Mettes have thus far been the only couple to get engaged in Rubinowitz's classroom. Still, he says the Law and Social Change class has inspired other surprising moments, including two separate moments when gay men publicly came out in the classroom. What inspires these declarations of self and love? “My classes, no matter what size they are, I call them seminars,” Rubinowitz says. “I really invite participation and view them as collaborative processes that students learn from each other. And I think that probably has something to do with it.”