

From *Dance of Resilience: Mike Berman's story*

I discovered a totally unexpected—and moving--story of dance and grief when I invited my political mentor to lunch when I traveled to Washington D.C. in June 2022. As I grow older, it is important to me to let my mentors and others know how much they've influenced my life. So I made a point to look up Mike Berman when I traveled to DC.

Mike opened the door to my political career, though he didn't know it. He hired me for my first summer political job as a secretary for the 1974 re-election campaign of Governor Wendell Anderson.

I remember being in the middle of everything and absorbing everything I could, like a sponge. He encouraged me to take on new challenges and to volunteer for some campaign advancement duties, and I loved it.

I went off to Duke Law School the end of August. After my first year in law school, I was hired back by the governor's office to work on various issues.

I remain grateful to this day for the support and interest that Mike took in me, a young woman.

When Walter Mondale became Vice President to President Jimmy Carter, Mike Berman moved to Washington DC to become the Vice President's Legal Counsel and Deputy Chief of Staff. Following that, Mike continued his deep involvement in politics with the Democratic National Committee and founded the Duberstein Group, a highly-respected government affairs consulting firm. He is author of the well-read online newsletter *Mike's Washington Watch* (www.original.mikeswashingtonwatch.com) and the book, *Living Large: A Big Man's Ideas on Weight, Success and Acceptance*.

I knew that his beloved wife Carol died in 2007. But when we met for lunch, I had no idea that Mike was also a dancer. Such a small world.

Here's Mike's loving memorial to Carol on his *Washington Watch* website written one year after her death:

On August 3, 1964, Carol Podhoretz and I met and had our first date. It was a blind date engineered by my sister, Sheila. When Carol first cast an eye on me, through the peephole in her apartment door, she decided that she was ill and could not go out.

The fact that she was dressed to the 9s let me know instantly what had happened. She had assumed I would look like my sister, who was pretty and slim. Instead she saw a not all that tall, bald man, who weighed nearly 300 pounds. This had happened before and was why I avoided blind dates. But Sheila had been persuasive. Carol was teaching a speech pathology practicum course in which Sheila was a student, and Sheila said it would help her if I took out this new woman in town.

Rather than be totally ungracious, Carol invited me in for a drink, and after an hour of conversation said she was feeling better if I still wanted to go out. We went out for an evening of dinner and dancing.

From that night on neither of us dated any other person and on December 19 of that year, Carol proposed and I accepted. On Christmas day, her birthday, I presented her with a ring. Just over a year after we first met, we were married.

Mike continued in his lovely memorial of Carol:

I miss our dancing. Carol had done a stint as an Arthur Murray instructor and my folks had taught me to be a respectable ballroom dancer.

We danced on our first date. We were dancing on December 19 when Carol proposed. We danced in our living room when no one was around. We danced at dances and parties. We danced out-of-doors. We could dance with or without music; we so knew each other's moves and rhythms.

Wow.

For the record, Mike is now remarried, has lost considerable weight, and at age 83 is still dancing, of course. I so appreciate him, and his story should inspire anyone.
