



"True love stories never have endings." ~Richard Bach

I Met My True Love at the Tom Cat!

BY JESSICA WESTERLAND

William Shakespeare said that "Love is an ever fixed mark." The Bible says "Love never fails." You can Google quotes about love, and read them all, but never really understand or see true love. That is, unless you have ever met Ray and Beth Forbes. Then you know without a doubt, that you have seen true love with your own eyes.

Straight from fairytales and romance movies, Ray and Beth met at the Tom Cat on Rio Grande Avenue, in 1955. Beth was going on 16, and Ray was 18. The Tom Cat was the place to be, complete with a big black cat up on the roof, and milkshakes and burgers everyone came there for.

"I was sitting with my friend Arlene, and Beth walked in. Arlene introduced us, and I fell in love immediately," Ray smiled, so glowing proud that he picked Beth. "All the girls needed a ride home, so I gave them a ride home," he continued. "Of course he made me sit in the middle," Beth interjected laughing. "Because all the cars had bench seats, so you could sit 3 in the front. So he sat me in the middle right next to him."

Not long after that, they had their first official date to a public swimming pool in Atlantic City with their church group, and began dating each other.

Ray moved to Wildwood as a boy with his family who were from Philadelphia. Beth moved to Wildwood as a kid also, as her father, John, became the pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) on Rio Grande Avenue. Previously the family lived in Wisconsin and were missionaries to the Native Americans there. Beth had 4 sisters and 2 brothers and fairly strict parents. However, despite the rules, Beth and Ray found ways to spend as much time as possible together.

"Her mother said that she could only go out on Friday nights, but I could come over the house if I wanted. And that is how it all got started," Ray said. Beth continued, "Well then I worked at Lock's, a soda fountain and variety store, and Ray would drop in there when I worked the supper hour. But later on in the evening [when I was home] I would tell my mother I had to walk down to Lock's to get a soda or something, and take a break from studying, so then Ray would um..." Beth started laughing as Ray finished, "So I would happen to just be there!"

Beth and Ray both lived on the island growing up, and had many of their dates through the years in Wildwood. "We were on the boardwalk endlessly," they agreed, walking, eating and relaxing on a bench. They loved to walk up and down Pacific Avenue and window shop, and hang out with their friends. They both went to the OPC and would have tea after services and chapel. They went to movies, and played board

games throughout the winter months on the island. Their love for Wildwood has never changed, as they still enjoy spending time here today.

They continued to date all through high school, and in fact got in trouble for doing so! "Ray would come over at lunch when I was in high school, and my French teacher would look out the side window of Wildwood high and see Ray drop me off and kiss me goodbye," Beth said. "Well my teacher took me upstairs and told me 'this has got to stop, this parking and making out!' After that, I guess it got spread around. At graduation we used to always get a novelty gift that would describe your personality. And I, well, I got a window shade!"

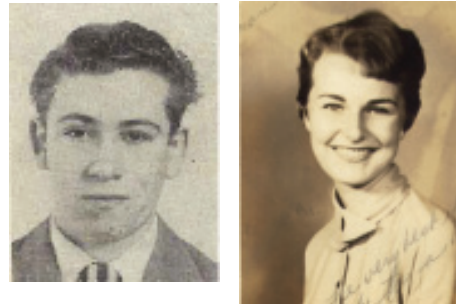
After Beth graduated high school, Ray proposed and they got engaged. They both worked hard through their year of engagement to save up money, and then got married June 28th of 1959. When asked how he proposed, Ray admitted he honestly didn't remember, because he proposed "all the time!" "A couple weeks after we started going out I told her we were going to get married!" Ray laughed. "By junior year of high school it was a given, I knew we were going to get married," Beth agreed.

After they got married, they got their first apartment in Arctic Court on Arctic Avenue, and also lived on Ocean Avenue before buying the house they still share today, in North Cape May. They still both go to the same church they grew up in, although they admit they have gone from being the young couple to one of the older couples!

They have always been there for each other, and in fact the only time Beth and Ray have ever been separated was when she stayed in the hospital over night for the births of their three children, Guy, Mark and Scott.

They have grown up together, and they are just as much in love now as they were then. Their eyes sparkle when they tell the stories of their childhood together, from teaching Beth to drive, to practical jokes that Ray and his friends would play, to the tall, slim Beth finally gaining some weight after they were married. They tell stories like one person, finishing each other's thoughts and interjecting what details the other forgot. While joking and poking fun at each other and their memories, it is apparent that the jesting is out of true and deep admiration for each other.

When talking about life in general, Beth mentioned they had a very down to earth kind of life, but "it goes fast, so just relish every second of it!" Relish, value, and treasure is what Ray and Beth have done with their lives, and their relationship with each other. They are a beautiful example of true love, and how true love never fails.



Ray Forbes and Beth Davies were both graduates of Wildwood High



The Tom Cat on Rio Grande Ave. in Wildwood, where Ray & Beth's love began



Ray & Beth Forbes in North Wildwood



Picking up his date at her home on E. Hand Ave.



Ray's Valentine, a blushing Beth



Ray & Beth Forbes, October, 2011



A regular boardwalk stop for the Forbes



Tommy Taylor of the Tom Cat, c. 1955

But the greatest of these is love.
~1CORINTHIANS 13:13