Kone Sparks Here Sparks Here A collection of Edgar County Love Stories



A LOVE STORY WRITTEN BY FATE:

SUBMITTED BY DUSTIN & KIESHA REED

Dustin and Kiesha Reed met through their mothers, but neither was particularly impressed. Kiesha thought Dustin was mean and annoying, while Dustin was convinced Kiesha was a brat. If someone had told them back then that they would one day build a life together, they both would have laughed.

Their journey from indifference to love didn't have a traditional first date. Instead, one night, they went bowling with friends. That simple outing turned out to be the beginning of something neither of them expected—a relationship.

Love snuck up on them quietly.

For Kiesha, it was the way

Dustin was always there for her. No matter what happened, he showed up, proving his loyalty time and time again. For Dustin, it was realizing he never wanted to be away from Kiesha. She had become his person, the one he wanted by his side through every high and low.

The early days of their relationship were filled with spontaneous road trips to Terre Haute, late-night dinners and adventures with friends. They found joy in the simple things, in the quiet moments just as much as the exciting ones.

Life, however, had its own plans for them.

Their first child came as a surprise, shifting their world in an instant. But rather than breaking them, it brought them closer. They faced the challenges of young parenthood together, determined to build a life for their growing family. Through hard work, perseverance and unwavering support for one another, they built something strong—something lasting.

There wasn't one defining moment that told them their love was forever. Instead, it was a collection of moments, small and steady, that proved time and again that they couldn't imagine life apart.

Dustin proposed to Kiesha at her high school graduation party, surrounded by family and friends in a park. It was planned, but simple—just like their love, built on real moments rather than grand gestures. They married in August, in an intimate ceremony by a pond, with their children by their side. It wasn't lavish, but it was perfect.

Through the years, they have grown together in ways they never imagined. Kiesha admires Dustin's intelligence, selflessness and loyalty. Dustin admires Kiesha's persistence—her ability to never give up, no matter what life throws at her. She pushes him to be better, and he encourages her to believe in herself.

Their love isn't just shown on special occasions—it's in the little things. A cup of coffee, a silly text or a random surprise just because. They support each other through tough times by listening, sharing responsibilities and simply being there. In their future, they hope to continue being blessed, to grow their restaurant and to cherish life with the people they love.

When asked to sum up ge

DUSTIN & KIESHA

their love story in one sentence, their answer is clear:

KEED

"God's plan is greater than ours. He brought us together and has helped keep us together."



Your Community PHARMACY



Medicine has changed over the years ...

Our customer service hasn't.

FRIDAY, FEB. 14, 2025 **3C**

LOVE IS PATIENT:

Drew & Shayleigh Bradshaw

SUBMITTED BY DREW BRADSHAW

I have only ever known a "true love" once.

In many lives, people go through boyfriends and girlfriends, joys and heartbreaks. Throughout school, I decided early on I didn't want to be involved in any of that (yet). I would say to anyone who asked, "I want to wait till I'm older" or "want to wait until I find the right person to date."

Looking back, I see that these types of statements coming from an elementary and middle school kid are funny. It's common for people to get to know themselves through others and experience in partnership.

As I got older, there were some potential girlfriends, but ultimately, I came to realize that if I was going to date someone, I wanted them to be someone with whom I felt I could be open completely.

I spent most of my time alone or with friends. I have always been an introvert, so this was something that didn't quite bother me. For the most part, I didn't spend too much time thinking about dating. I was much more interested in my hobbies: watching movies, collecting comic books and Lego.

When it came to extracurricular activities, I was very dedicated to my Boy Scout troop. I loved Kayaking, hiking and spending time around the fire. I was also one of the top popcorn practicing for weeks, and the show was starting to come together. About the week before the crew was going to start helping, the world stopped.

The pandemic hit, and the show was delayed. Schools closed for safety and to prevent the spread of the virus. At first, it was easy. As an introvert, a few weeks, even a month or two at home was nice. I got to spend time watching movies and working on my plans for my Eagle Project in Scouts. Then it got harder: drama practices never started back up again, and our scout meetings were forced to an online format. By the end of the semester, Grease was officially canceled. Everything was different. Even when things started to lighten up, my family and I decided that I should remain online for most of my senior year of school. Like many during this time, the feeling of loneliness became overwhelming.

Despite remaining fully online, I decided I wanted to still be in the next high school show, Clue. I was hoping to return to the position of stage manager, but it wasn't certain whether or not there was going to be a crew due to limitations with the pandemic. With that potential, my friends encouraged me to try out for an onstage part.

I was hesitant at first, but my love of the Clue film from 1985 gave me confidence that I would enjoy it. I was cast as Mr. Green (my favorite character from the film). One of my fellow cast members and I quickly got to know the show. She told me that she liked the movie, and watching it helped her memorize her part as Mrs. White. This girl, Shayleigh Cline, caught my attention as a fellow film fan. her backstage was when we started to be close, and I felt like I was starting to have a true friendship with her, maybe even more than that. But the star of the stage could never take real notice of the guy behind the curtains, I thought.

Our friend group continued to spend time together through the rest of the year. We graduated, I finished my Eagle project, and summer came. My life was changing in massive ways, and I was being changed with it.

My time with Scouts was coming to an end, and college was around the corner. In many ways, I was having to reshape who I was. Throughout the summer, Shayleigh would invite us all to her house for movie night and to kayak in the lake behind her parents' house. Eventually, I had finally come to the realization that I did like her, and I felt that I might be able to trust her in a way I had been waiting for all these years.

I remember one specific night. We were all sitting around the fire. Two of our friends were trying to help set Shayleigh up with people online (which she really wasn't interested in but politely heard them out).

One of them was listing off things about one of the guys.

"He loves to travel, likes Disney, etc." Secretly, in my head, I was thinking, "I like Disney; I like traveling." I was learning that her interests and mine were not far off. I was catching myself finding more and more ways that I liked her. favorite movie series, Star Wars, there is a short scene where one of the characters, Anakin, gives a necklace called a "Jupor Snippet" to a girl he likes.

I worked on the necklace in the hopes she would like it, but I didn't expect her to recognize it from the movie. I took some wood from a block I had in my room. With small carving tools and my pocket knife from Scouts, I made the necklace over the course of the week. When she came back, she once again invited us over to her house for kayaking.

With butterflies in my stomach, I arrived at her house with my friend. We went to the backyard, and everyone was getting the kayaks ready.

I went to Shayleigh and told her I had something for her. The nerd I am, I gave her the necklace and loosely quoted what Anakin said in the movie.

She gave me a hug and thanked me, and that was that. In my mind, I gave the idea that I liked her, and then from there, we could start to build our relationship.

Little did I know, until later on, that I totally freaked her out. By some weird coincidence of fate, she had mentioned to her best friend in a random passing conversation at Disney that if someone ever gave her a Jupor Snippet, she would marry them. Of course, she meant this jokingly, but it was still a scary coincidence. No one had told me that she had said that. In fact, I wouldn't know that until a few years later, shortly before we actually got married.

With excitement, she told her whole family about the necklace I made her. She had no idea up until that moment that I liked her. From there, I eventually, at midnight on the fourth of July, asked her out on our first date to the movies. I brought her flowers while she was in the orchestra for the community theater. Then, on July 18, 2021, I asked her to be my girlfriend.

My life had never felt so full of joy as it did when we were dating. The only joy that has surpassed that time is now in our marriage. As we neared our engagement and eventually our marriage this past May 18 (exactly 34 months after we started dating), we began to learn small details about our lives that were interconnected. Our intertwined paths, as corny as it sounds, seemed to have always been destined to come together.

Just as she was my first and only love, I was hers. Neither of us had ever dated before each other. We both had waited until the right person came along into our lives, and we were both blessed that they did.



sellers in our district for a few years in a row. This became my main social outlet and a large part of my identity. All my friends and fellow students knew me as a Boy Scout, and I was proud of it.

But still, some part of me felt alone. It wasn't an overwhelming feeling at the time, but it was still there. I had great friends who cared about me, but I was still missing that one person I could truly rely on with anything and everything.

In my Sophomore year of high school, I joined the drama club. Being on stage was nothing I'd even remotely consider at the time, but backstage was more my style. Moving sets on and off, pulling the ropes and keeping track of props became important tasks, and I took them very seriously. By my Junior year, I was asked to be the stage manager.

The directors, Tanner and Agnes Laughlin put a lot of trust in me to run the stage. The first show I was going to be in charge of as stage manager was the musical Grease. The cast had been I would become closer with her and the rest of the cast throughout the production. We all went to prom together as a group, then all went to Shayleigh's house afterward and the next morning, we all took a trip to Turkey Run to hike (a very exhausting thing to do after prom night).

This group of people quickly became my best friends. Once again, I had people, but I still missed one thing. Despite returning to normal life, I still felt I was in isolation emotionally.

Shortly after Clue ended, we started on the next show, Hello Dolly. Shayleigh got the lead role as Dolly Levi, and I was again backstage as the Stage Manager. During practices, hearing her voice and chatting with Her love of Disney World was so great that she not only went with the school band but later on with her parents on their family summer trip. While she was away for a week at Disney with the band, I devised a strategy.

I knew a lot of my friends used Snapchat, so I thought if I friended her on that, I would be able to "snap" her while she was away to "be cool." Later, I found out that she hardly used Snapchat. Eventually, she asked if we could just text, so she gave me her phone number, and we stayed connected that way.

I spent most of the days that week crafting the best ways to respond to her texts. I also fabricated "delays in response" to act like I wasn't too eager. I put a lot of thought and time into our conversations.

During all of this, I had devised a plan to tell her how I felt without being too forward about it. I was going to carve her a necklace. In one of our

My Love, My Lacie

SUBMITTED BY JONATHAN BLAIR

From the moment I saw you, dancing without a care in the world, I knew you were special. You weren't trying to be perfect—you just were. I stood there watching you, completely captivated, knowing deep down that I fell. my life had just changed.

Our first date wasn't extravagant. It wasn't candlelit or fancy. It was drinks and pool at Shooters, and I had exactly \$33 to my name. But I wanted to take you out more than anything. You didn't care about money. You didn't care about anything but being with me. That's when I knew—you were the one I wanted.

I remember the way you looked

at me that night while we played pool, something unspoken between us. And later, back at my apartment, in that quiet moment, I saw it. You were happy. You were peace. You were everything I knew you could be. That's when

You've always been my passenger princess, trusting me to take the wheel even when I had no license to do so. And I swore to myself that I would be the one to drive you wherever you needed to go, no matter what it took. So, I paid my dues. Because I don't just want to take care of you—I want to be the one who carries you through life.

ond child, my son-maybe our last baby. I'll never forget that night, thinking it was just another evening, having a drink, relaxing. And then there he was, on the floor, in the middle of the night, perfect. You were the real hero that night. I just stood there in awe, knowing this tiny life we created was another piece of the love we share.

Lacie, we are the best team. You are strong, independent, the perfect complement to me. I knew this love was forever when I saw you cry for the first time. In that moment, I saw every part of you, and I never wanted to let go. That's why I took you back to

Then there was Ronin, our sec- Los Tres Camino's-the place

where we shared our first taco together-and made it official. It was planned, every detail, because I always knew this moment would come. Sitting across from you, looking at you just like I did on that very first night, I knew it was right.

You keep me grounded. You make me better. You kiss me out of nowhere just to remind me that you love me. And I love the way you lose yourself in puzzles and coloring, your little things that make you, you.

I don't need traditions, Lacie. I don't need grand gestures or big moments. A perfect day is simply one that makes you happy. A date night at Los Tres Camino's, a

quiet evening with our familythat's all I'll ever need.

As long as we continue to love, to grow, to fight for each other, I know we'll be okay. If I could relive one moment, it would be when you got your last tattoo, and you wanted me there. Because every time you choose me, I feel like the luckiest man alive.

If I could give the world advice, I'd tell them: Never go to bed mad.

And if I could sum up our love in one sentence, it would be this: "From the second I met you, I

knew you were the one."

Forever yours, Jonathan

"Tell me you don't love me"





Swing & Cha Cha Wednesday 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Fox Trot & Rhumba Wednesday 7:15-8:15 p.m.

February 26 – April 2 Partner required



Love, Honor and Negotiate. Donald & Dorothy McGee

SUBMITTED BY DONNA MCGEE

In August of 2024, Donald and Dorothy McGee celebrated 65 years of marriage.

Donald McGree, of Chester, and Dorothy Jackson, of Paris, met at Southern Illinois University. They married on Saturday, Aug. 22, 1959, at the Second Baptist Church of Paris. They were blessed with two children, Donna Mc-Gee-Johnson (Andrea Johnson) of Paris and Michael of Winfield, Ill.

Don started his teaching and coaching career during the 1959-60 school year in Cairo. He worked for the rest of his impressive career in the greater Chicago metropolitan area, succeeding while teaching and coaching in the south and western suburbs.

He was eventually recruited for coaching jobs at Division One colleges, but he stayed at the high school level because he loved teaching math and coaching young people.

His greatest professional success was leading the Wheaton Central Tigers to fourth place in the 1981 Illinois High School Association, Class AA State Tournament. Don's contribution to basketball has been recognized by induction into the Illinois Basketball Coach Association Hall of Fame, the Chester Yellowjacket Hall of Fame, the Wheaton-Warrenville South Hall of Fame and the Thornton Township High School Hall of Fame.

Dorothy was always his best cheerleader and sounding board. While supporting her coach and raising their family, she found time to teach classes that taught adults how to prepare, use and read IBM punch cards.

While a young mother, Dorothy also worked at the local park district. Some of the teens she worked with there were also in Don's math classes. They formed lifelong

.

bonds, and some have even come to Paris to visit "The Coach" and Mrs. McGee.

During tense situations in basketball games, Dorothy was often found doing needlework or knitting. She also dedicated many time outs and halftimes to planning her next project, making drawings and notes in the notepads she always carried with her.

Dorothy leveraged her extensive artisan experience to teach needle arts while selling needlecraft kits. She is also an accomplished quilter, seamstress and knitter and has proved herself more

SUBMITTED BY DAVID AND BARBARA DICK

It was the late summer of 1972 when Barbara arrived in Paris—not in France, but in Illinois—to begin her new role as an elementary music teacher. It wasn't long before she met Frances Dick, a kind woman who invited her to a Sunday school gathering at her family home. Barbara didn't realize then that this casual invitation would introduce her to the man who would become her husband. But sparks didn't fly that night. David didn't make much of an impression on Barbara, and she certainly didn't charm him at first sight either. In fact, his first thought was, "I don't think this is The One."

than capable in countless other crafts.

Don and Dorothy enjoy traveling and have visited most of the U.S. and many Canadian provinces.

Their favorite way to spend time is visiting with their three amazing, fascinating, accomplished grandchildren Michael McGee, Junior, Hannah McGee and Spencer McGee. They also treasure visits with their nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, and greatgreat-nieces and great-greatnephews.

The couple likes trying new restaurants and return-

more time to come to the same realization, but when she did, it was clear that their connection was worth holding onto.

As life often does, it soon threw them a curveball. In October, David was drafted into the military and left for basic training in November. Before departing, he proing to familiar ones with their friends. Don still looks forward to going to SIU and University of Illinois basketball games and likes to attend activities with the First Christian Church Men's group. Dorothy is also quite active in their church and has fun on outings with her Paris High School classmates.

Their many happy years together were supported by their motto, "Love, Honor and Negotiate."

On Dec. 29, 2024, Don went to be with the Lord at Providence Health Care in St. Mary Of The Woods, Ind.

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the power of humor, patience and communication. They've never been ones to go to bed angry, often diffusing tension with a welltimed joke or a moment of lightheartedness.

"Barbara sometimes turns contentious moments into humorous ones," David shares. "She knows how to



A LIFETIME OF LOVE David & Barbara Dick

Their first date wasn't exactly a scene from a romance novel either—it was a picnic hosted by David's ex-girlfriend.

And yet, somewhere between that picnic and the fall of 1972, something changed. Though Barbara wasn't immediately swept off her feet, David quickly expressed his feelings, telling her, "I love you" early on in their relationship. Barbara needed

posed—not with an elaborate, well-planned moment, but with a simple, spontaneous question. Though it wasn't a scene from a romance film, it was sincere, and Barbara said yes.

Their wedding day—April 1, 1973—was cold, rainy and on a day traditionally reserved for pranks. But the love they vowed to share that day was no joke. Just nine days later, David was sent to Thessaloniki, Greece, for his military assignment. Barbara finished the school year and joined him in June, beginning their married life thousands of miles away from family and friends. Those early years were challenging, but they also laid the foundation for a strong, resilient partnership.

Through more than five decades of marriage, Barbara and David have learned break the ice, and I guess I do too."

For Barbara, David's patience and quiet wisdom have been among his most admirable qualities. When asked what advice she would give to couples considering marriage, her response is simple but profound: "Find someone who is more interested in you than they are in themselves."

Now, with 51 years of marriage behind them, Barbara and David continue to embrace life's adventures, traveling across the U.S. and beyond, grateful for good health and the many blessings they've shared. When asked to sum up their love story in one sentence, their answer is as beautiful as it is true:

"Together, we've enjoyed a lifetime of God's blessings."



SUBMITTED BY VICTORIA LEITCH

Love stories come in all shapes and sizes, but some are so charming and unexpected that they deserve to be told in their rawest, most honest form. This is one of those stories—a tale of two people who found love in a way that was anything but conventional yet utterly perfect for them.

David and Jennifer Craig's journey began in 2020 with a simple connection through mutual friends on Facebook. It wasn't an immediate fairy tale or love at first sight, but rather a story filled with humor, surprises and an undeniable pull toward one another.

Their first date set the tone for their relationship: spontaneous, slightly chaotic and full of quirks. The Craigs enjoyed an evening at the movies and David enjoyed a sushi dinner. Jenny avoided the sushi and soaked in her surroundings and date.

While the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was a period of uncertainty and hardship for many people, it was the ultimate test of compatibility for the Craigs.

"If we could tolerate each other for two weeks in lockdown, we knew we'd be okay," Jenny said.

And she was right.

But life didn't make things easier through the years. They have faced countless trials—cancer, relocating and various struggles of their children.

"We depend on each other's strengths to navigate us through our weakest points," David said. "I know our love is forever every day

I wake up."

Forget grand gestures or candlelit dinners. The Craigs sealed their engagement through a meme. While in different towns at their jobs, a simple text message with a funny picture turned into a marriage proposal.

"He proposed to me via meme in a text asking me to marry him. I sent him a meme back with an obvious yes. Two days later, we were married," Jenny said.

Their wedding day was just as delightfully untraditional. Held in a friend's backyard on a beautiful fall day, everything was perfect—except for one tiny detail. David forgot the ring, leading to a last-minute solution: zip ties.

"He forgot my Ring Pop. I specifically asked him for a red Ring Pop, so we had to use zip ties. I still have them!" Jenny said. "He made sure to go get my Ring Pop afterward, though."

Their love story is filled with quirks—like their deep affection for their five dogs, which is both a joy and a source of playful frustration.

"He babies those dogs more than me," Jenny laughed. "I can be right next to him, and I don't even get a kiss until after all of the dogs."

But it's those little things that make their relationship special. Like how she cooks meals that he jokes will "clog his arteries" and the most outlandish gifts he gives her, including a dozen "Roses," which was a cardboard cutout of Betty White's face on the top of roses. Their dream is simple: grow old and gray together and dance like fools in a tiny cabin in the middle of nowhere, Tennessee. In their eyes, a perfect life isn't about extravagance but about being with each other, enjoying the little things, and embracing every twist and turn that life throws their way.

"Every little thing she does makes me happy and smile. The most annoying thing in the world to someone else is amazing to me," David said.

With a love that the Craigs describe as "riding a rollercoaster with your best friend," they are proof that the best relationships aren't always traditional—they're the ones that make you laugh, push you to grow and stand the test of time.



LEAP INTO LOVE:

SUBMITTED BY WILLIAM DUEY

The Rev. William and Mary Ann Duey will celebrate their 15th wedding anniversary in 2024 after 60 years of marriage. The couple's wedding was Feb. 29, 1964, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Danville. They chose that Saturday because it was the only weekend William Duey had free from his preaching responsibilities in Lent.

He was the assistant pastor at St Paul's Lutheran Church and

School in Decatur.

William Duey graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., in the spring of 1961. Ann Duey graduated in 1962 from the Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing in St. Louis and was employed at St Mary's Hospital in Decatur, where they met.

In the spring of 1964 the couple was called by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, to serve in deaf ministry, deaf-blind and hearing impaired with special needs in North Texas and Oklahoma with an office at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church - John of Beverley Chapel for the Deaf in Dallas, Texas till the summer of 1970.

From the summer of 1970 to the fall of 1991, William Duey was pastor at St Paul's Lutheran Church, Rural Dorans, Mattoon; of Mt Calvary Lutheran Church, Galesburg until October 1997.

Then called and trained as an Intentional Interim Pastor for the Northern Illinois District. The Duey's moved to Yorkville serving congregations as an Intentional Interim Pastor at Hope, Park Forest; St Paul Church and School, Addison; Trinity Church and School, Lombard; Trinity Church and Preschool, Genoa; Christ our Savior, Winfield; Messiah, of Sterling; Trinity, Dwight which he served till the end of July,2011.

In the summer of 2011, the couple moved to Fort Mill, South Carolina to be near the family of their youngest son Joseph and his wife Jenny. William Duey served as an Intentional Interim Pastor at Bethel, Claremont, North Carolina and at Lake Wylie, Fort Mill, South Carolina.

ILLIAM & MARY

N DUEY

The couple moved from Fort Mill to Grace Lutheran Village in Paris in October 2022.

After 60 years of marriage, Ann Duey says the relationship has stood the test of time because of their faith. The Dueys have four children, 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.





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been looking at over the years I've capacity to export that data," Dolan

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The Prairie Press

"This has been something I've lic safety. 1012200590

CHRISMAN-During the Monday, Feb. 3, Chrisman City meeting, Police Chief Tom Dolan presented the board with the need for a new police data management system. The council displayed a troubling level of resistance to the system, disregarding the growing need for modernization and improved pub-

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BY VICTORIA LEITCH vleitch@prairiepress.net

other things we needed to focus on, but I found out that we have to report our activity through an automated data system to the state of Il-

Dolan explained.

INSID CALENDA CLASSIFIE HEALTH HISTORY

ciated with it. It's just a document." The current operating system has been described as slow, unreliable and prone to complications. linois, and that ends up going to the It hinders the police department's FBI. This is a fairly new procedure," ability to track crime patterns, coordinate responses and maintain "We're not compliant with the (Uniform Crime Reporting Act) reessential records. porting because we don't have the

RECORD SCHOOL SPORTS

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T<mark>he new s</mark>ystem Dolan request this Act" ed would cost \$3,040 (\$2,500 onetime fee and \$540 yearly) and significantly improve these issues. » CHRISMAN, 10A