

## **A Valentine's Day Love Story: Robert and Glenda**

*Unconditional love, by definition, means to love without conditions. When a person loves unconditionally, they expect nothing in return. They love wholeheartedly through the ups and downs of the roller coaster called life. Robert and Glenda's love is the purest example of this kind of love.*

Robert Ferguson, 83, vividly remembers the day he met a beautiful woman at Gate City Baptist Church in 1955. From the high-neck top to the plaid skirt she was wearing, he was blown away by her beauty. "She had a blue sweater on. I thought it was her boyfriend's, but it turned out it was her brothers," Robert said with a chuckle as he fondly recounts the day.

He mustered up the courage to speak to the beautiful woman whose name was Glenda. Little did they know that their encounter would be the beginning of a timeless love story that would withstand all unprecedented challenges of life.

Robert is a Birmingham native. He spent most of his life in Roebuck Plaza. Glenda was born in Jasper, Alabama; a city about 40 miles out of Birmingham. Growing up, she attended Woodlawn High school.

Robert and Glenda dated for 3 years before getting married in 1957. Robert was a hard-working man and an excellent provider for his family. He was a plant manager at Griffin Wheel Company for many years, where he would retire. Glenda was a kind soul who always had an affinity for children. She worked at CenterPoint daycare for many years. She loved her job and it reflected in how she interacted with children.

For the past few years, they have lived in Pinson, Alabama and attend Clearview Baptist Church.

They have four children together: Randy, Renee', Rodney, and Robyn. As their children grew up and started families of their own, the Ferguson's were blessed with 15 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Both Robert and Glenda were delighted to see their family grow.

Robert explained that their children and grandchildren mean the world to them. They love the liveliness their grandchildren bring to their lives. "They are wonderful grandparents and both have such servant's hearts and love the Lord," Renee', daughter of the Fergusons, said adoringly about her parents.

One word that comes to Renee's mind when describing her parent's relationship is fun. "Mom thought Dad was the funniest person on earth and would giggle at all his jokes and stories," she explains. "Growing up, I remember she would get up early when he was heading to work and hand him his lunchbox and they would ALWAYS kiss goodbye."

In 2011, Robert and Glenda would receive news that would alter their lives from that moment on. Glenda was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Her family had noticed signs before her diagnosis. Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. There is currently no cure for the disease.

“We couldn’t do things we used to,” Robert explained. “We would always celebrate Valentine’s Day and anniversaries, but things changed.” As the disease began to affect her memory, Robert was by her side every step of the way.

He would help with her daily activities. He would bathe her, brush her hair, bandage sores, and help her into her wheelchair. Robert was adamant that from the moment Glenda received a diagnosis, he would be the one to care for her.

Although life, as he knew, was inevitably changing, there was one thing that would never change, his love for his wife. “My love for her never changed. It only grew stronger as time went on,” Robert said confidently. He loved her from the moment he met her, throughout their life before her diagnosis, during her time living with Alzheimer’s, to the moment she passed away in December 2018.

“There was never any doubt that he would care for her until the end,” Renee’ said about her father.

For 7 years the Fergusons experienced firsthand the challenges of Alzheimer’s disease. Glenda was one of 5.8 million Americans who have been diagnosed with the disease.

“I will look at pictures and cry and just think about what we used to do,” Robert said. Although it still pains him that she is not physically with him, he knows GOD is in control and his beloved Glenda is in a better place. Telling their love story ushers in acute nostalgia for Robert. Despite being overcome by waves of emotions, it brings him comfort to talk about his wife and remember the life they built together.

Robert and Glenda’s love story embodies the exact definition of unconditional love. 61 years of marriage and their love will continue to stand the test of time.