

**50 SHADES OF GRAY? (HAIR THAT IS)
LOVE IS AVAILABLE AT ANY AGE!
A TRUE STORY OF TRUE LOVE**

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EUGENE AND LAURA REED

And they lived happily ever after! Wait isn't that usually the end of the story. Well yes, but all of us romance junkies want a happy ending so why not just go ahead and get the good feelings at the beginning of the story.

The church was crowded. Over 400 people in attendance from all over the United States, whispering in anticipation of this blessed event. The groom stood tall and handsome in his tailored black tuxedo as he waited for his bride to be. And then the familiar chord struck, the bridal march began and she entered the sanctuary. We all rose on one accord. I felt goose bumps and the tears sprang freely as I watched the graceful elegant beautiful woman we called Mama Laura walk down the aisle at the age of 85. But that again is putting the almost end before the beginning to this love story.

Laura Nobles was born on June 29, 1921 in Tucson, Arizona. At the age of 22, she was President of the USO Hostess Club at the canteen at Davis Monathon Air Force Base. Each day she would take her bath, put on her favorite perfume and gleefully proceed to the base. Every day was special to her because of her strong desire to serve humanity. The war was raging in Europe and the Pacific. Working in the canteen was her way of giving a little joy and laughter to the "boys" before they were shipped off to fight. The year was 1943.

"You smell just like sunshine", Laura heard a very masculine voice say. But as she was a shy girl she did not turn in the direction of the voice. He repeated, "You smell just like sunshine", and you look like dew drops from heaven". Laura turned and looked into the eyes of the most beautiful man her young innocent eyes had ever seen. He was respectfully but deliciously close to her and her knees felt weak. "May I have this dance?" he asked as he laughed. First, because I want to dance with you, but also because it looks like you need some help remaining on your feet. All she could do was to nod. And that was how it began; her first encounter with love. His name was Eugene Reed and he was 20 years old. Later that evening, she reflected that she had not heard the music of any of the many songs to which they had danced. She had only followed the rhythm of their hearts which seemed to beat as one. As the days passed the feelings continued to grow. They danced. They walked in the noonday and in the moonlight. They spent hours just talking. By the time Gene ventured to have their first kiss, the emotional charge was so strong between them that Laura swore to her girlfriends that sparks flew off her body and lit up the night. They had eyes only each other for over a year. Laura knew that she had met her soul mate; her one true love. And Gene expressed the same feelings. And then it came. The

letter of deployment. And Gene was off to the Pacific. It was 1944. Before he left Laura listened to her head and not her heart and ended the relationship. She cried for days... heart-broken but stalwart in her decision.

The beautiful and determined young Laura went on to finish college and become a teacher. Her hour-glass figure, smooth brown skin, and quick wit drew many a young suitor to her door, but she took none too seriously. But in 1948 she met a tall dashing young man by the name of Jack Banks. He wooed her and won her heart. Not since her first love had she felt the magic she that felt with him. By 1950 they were wed and enjoyed 48 more years of love, marriage, and financial success. Jack and Laura owned and operated Jack's Original Bar-B-Que for 40 years which earned them a place in the Restaurant Hall of Fame. After retirement, they moved to San Antonio in 1992. Jack died in 1998.

Laura, who was a nationally recognized and highly honored educator, civil rights and social service leader, busied herself by philanthropic giving, traveling, serving in social and civic organizations, and pursuing her dreams. But by 2003, she was lonely and began to pray for a companion with whom to share her later years. She dated a few old and new acquaintances but nothing inspired her to pursue more permanent arrangements.

Thanksgiving Day 2005, she was cleaning out some files and came across the phone number of Gene's sister Catherine "Surely the number has changed after all these years," she thought. But she decided to call and was really surprised to find it was still in service. After catching up a bit on their respective lives, Laura broached," how is that brother of yours?" "Oh he's fine, he lives in Bakersfield. He lives alone, his wife died in 2002." Wanting see her two old friends, she invited them both to come to San Antonio for a visit.

The day arrived! "Why am I so nervous?" she asked herself. When she saw him her heart skipped a beat. At 84 he was still so handsome. She went about welcoming them and being the consummate hostess she had always been assigning rooms, giving towels, making conversation, etc. After dinner Gene said to her, "Young Lady, aren't you forgetting something?" She turned in wonder; hadn't see thought of everything? And then he walked over to her and kissed her firmly on the mouth. Laura always remarks that electricity shot through her that she didn't even think was still possible. She said the kiss felt like home and that it had not been 61 years since their last kiss. It felt just as if he was home again on furlough and his kisses still lit up the sky. Ten months later, March 2006, they were married with 400 well-wishers in attendance. And yes, they **are** living happily ever after! At age 95, she falls asleep every night wrapped in his loving embrace.