

## **Reflections on Learning III: Darling You and I—The Story of Evelyn Heintz Meyer**

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World War II had a lasting effect on the American people. For many families, it was not uncommon for a brother, son, daughter, cousin, or even a parent to have been killed in the war. Others endured long periods of separation from loved ones who were called to various parts of the world to serve this country. Such was the case for Evelyn Heintz Meyer and her family. Toward the latter part of the 1930s and into the early 1940s, every aspect of her life changed. All that was normal in her home, family, and work life shifted for over five years as the conflict around the world tried to reach a resolution.

Before the war, Evelyn and her family lived in New Orleans, Louisiana. She then resided with her mother, grandmother, and infant son Lance. Evelyn also had an ongoing relationship with a man named Paul Meyer, who lived in New Orleans with his family, as well. Evelyn and Paul spent as much time as they could together. Because Evelyn was completing cosmetology school to become a beautician and Paul worked as a sheet metal mechanic with his father, their time spent together was limited. At the age of twenty-two, Evelyn completed cosmetology school and started working with her mother in a beauty salon that was connected to their home. Soon after, Paul was called to serve in World War II. Evelyn was scared and distraught over the news. Although she knew Paul had to go, everything in her wanted him to stay home close to her. The week before Paul left for the war, he surprised Evelyn by asking her to marry him. Evelyn was overjoyed and quickly responded, “Yes, of course!” However, she also felt sad because Paul would be leaving in one week. During the following week, Evelyn and Paul spent every waking moment together in preparation for the long separation ahead of them.

Although Evelyn and Paul were apart while he was fighting in the war in France, they continuously conversed through letters and shared many memories through pictures. Paul served as a military policeman during the war and even had one of the prisoners paint portraits of Evelyn and himself. He also constantly sent things home to Evelyn, which made her feel special and anxious for his return. Though she was worried about his safety and longed for the war to finally be over, Evelyn found solace in one thing—the song, “Darling You and I.” Each time she heard the song, it reminded her of her relationship with Paul and gave her encouragement and comfort.

Although her mind was often on Paul, Evelyn kept busy by caring for Lance and working at the beauty salon. Evelyn and her mother had to work long hours in the evening to accommodate many women who worked during the day and had to support their families while their husbands were away fighting. Yet, even at the salon, Evelyn was reminded of Paul because the women were constantly speaking of the effects of the war on their lives and town. Though her separation from Paul remained difficult, Evelyn realized that every day that passed brought her one day closer to their reunion. She did not know exactly when Paul would come home, but he kept her up to date with everything that was going on. In anticipation, Evelyn continued to make plans for their wedding, which would take place when Paul returned home.

Finally, Evelyn received a letter from Paul in early May of 1945 stating that he would be coming home in two weeks. Evelyn was thrilled and immediately set the final date for their wedding. Evelyn and Paul were reunited on May 18, 1945; the scene was a perfect picture of true love. On Paul’s way home, he wrote down the lyrics to “Darling You and I” and presented them to Evelyn that afternoon. The song had meant so much to the both of them during the time they were separated. Evelyn and Paul finalized their wedding plans and were married on June 10,

1945. After the marriage, they moved into a new house in New Orleans where they had three more children. Evelyn quit working at the beauty salon to stay home and care for their children. Since he had served as a military policeman during the war, Paul aspired to be a New Orleans police officer; but, after careful consideration, he returned to his job as a sheet metal mechanic. Evelyn and Paul lived in their home for fifty wonderful years filled with love and happiness; the two grew closer and closer during each year spent together. Unfortunately, in 1986, Paul passed away. But, their love still lives on through memories and the song that Evelyn loves and adores to this day, "Darling You and I." As Evelyn so perfectly describes it:

My darling and I lived through some hard times and some good times. I miss him each and every day I am still here on this Earth. Sometimes I feel just like I felt when I was twenty-two—that he is just away at war and he will return home to me, but I know that is not true. I do believe and have faith that I will see him again; and I can't wait until I am reunited with my darling again.