

WWII: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT STORIES

By Barbara Darnell Bryant. MaryDon Beeson provided several photos.



Thelma Merida Catterson

One time I was talking to my mother (Thelma Merida Catterson Darnell Haller) about love at first sight and she surprised me with a couple of stories. I knew she loved dancing but did not know that she went to dances at Camp McCoy during WWII. That is where she met my Dad (Pvt. George Clovis Darnell) who was in the Army Air Corps. When she was introduced to my dad, she said it was love at first sight for both of them. They dated for a few months. He also sent her some postcards which were free to send through the mail and we still have in our possession. He gave her a sweetheart pin, then he was transferred overseas and sent letters when he could. When in France, he made her a bracelet

from coins (called trench art). After the war he was discharged and returned home to Texas. He sent my mother a telegram asking her to come to Texas so they could get married. She got on a train and they were married October 31, 1945 in Bay City, Texas. They had four children from that union. Unfortunately, their marriage ended in divorce. Thelma had a second marriage, to Raymond Haller, who died earlier than my mother. When my mother was planning where to be buried, she surprised us children because she expressed the desire to purchase a plot next to my father because she said he was her soul mate.



Pvt. George Clovis Darnell at home of Christina Kraemer Catterson

Mom and Dad are buried in Midfield, Texas. Dad served from 5 Aug 1940 - 3 Oct 1945. My sister Linda used the coins from the trench art bracelet and remade it into a necklace for my brother and into bracelets for me and my sisters.



Thelma Merida Catterson wearing the Sweetheart Pin from George Clovis Darnell



Kay tries on her uncle Austin Walsh's uniform for a patriotic photo, 1943 on the Sylvester Kraemer farm

My mother told me about her cousin Kay (Agatha Katherine "Kay" Kraemer, daughter of Mary Elizabeth Walsh and Sylvester Kraemer) who came from Plain to attend dances with my mom, my grandmother (Christina Kraemer Catterson), and Lillian Nelson (who later became Marcel Catterson's wife). One night an Army man, Allan Peter Rolstad, asked Kay to dance and she said it was love at first sight for both of them. He asked her to marry him that night and they got married on 31 Oct 1944. She and Allan settled in Seattle, Washington, and had ten children from that union. Allen served in the Army from 9 Apr 1942 - 7 Dec 1945.



Allan Peter Rolstad in 1944

One time my family and I visited my cousin Kay in Seattle. I told her I knew about how she had met her husband, fell in love at first sight and got

married. But what I didn't know until Kay revealed the shocker was that after Allen asked her to marry him, they got married THE NEXT WEEK END! So, love at first sight is real! And isn't it crazy that both my mother and Kay married on Oct 31st! It wasn't a trick - it was a treat for sure!

I do believe in love at first sight. I joined the United States Navy in 1966 and was stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas. When I saw my husband, Robert Byrant, on the base, it was love at first sight for both of us. That night he told me he wanted to marry me. We dated from Thanksgiving Day 1966 to the middle of January 1967. He asked me to marry him, I got an engagement ring and then he was transferred to Whidbey Island, Washington. We decided to get married in a year, but after writing many letters and several phone calls we decided to get married in May 1967. We have been happily married for 51 years.