

Chapter Eight: Where and when—California, North Dakota, Iowa

Roman and Noel: "No thank you."

Hawthorne, California July 27, 1943

Tuesday, July 21st
176 Cedar Street
Hawthorne, Cal.

Tuesday, July 27th
776 Cedar Street
Hawthorne, Cal.

Dear Veronica, Jim, Maureen, & Jeanie,

How are you all getting along and standing the heat? I am still bumming around California taking life easy. I have been staying at Harahan's, visiting at Thorwaldsons' and right now I'm down here at Long Beach visiting Joan Nielsen. I came here on Sunday afternoon and I am going back to

Hawthorne tomorrow, I guess. I have enjoyed myself so much this past two weeks. The trip out was grand. Guess I told you we came through Yellowstone Park and stayed there one night. Saw geysers, fountain paint park and so many things. Got a thrill out of driving through the mountains and seeing the ocean. I've already had my feet in the Pacific.

There are jobs by the hundreds around here. I wanted to come down to Long Beach and see if I'd like this better than L. A. And I think so. Everyone has been so grand, taking me around and showing me things. I've been dancing a few times already. Which is soup for me!

I'd like to go to Phoenix before I start working to see Uncle Danny & Aunt Ada but try to call them Friday night and they had gone on a fishing trip. Maybe I'll go yet. Will have to start working pretty soon though or run out of money?

It has been real cool here and one always has to wear a coat at night. I've seen more women wearing fur coats since I came out here. They wear anything from shorts to formals. It's sure a crazy place and I'm sure I'm going to like it. It won't rain now until this winter. The sun shines every day. Yes, I'm getting tan.

They have barrage balloons anchored all over the coast here, and planes overhead every minute. They target practice with the machine guns & big cannons out over the sea and at Matilda's it's so loud it even rattles the windows. It sort of gets under my skin. Sounds just like real war and they are sure ready for it here!

It's fun to watch the search lights at night spotting planes. Once they spot one-day stay on it, lighting it all up like a star. It wouldn't be so pretty if it were an enemy plane though, although they say an enemy plane couldn't get in this far.

Suppose Mother told you Ann and JoAnn came up from Jamestown the Sunday I was home. The baby is rotated & so fat. I don't see how she can walk. Of course, she isn't as pretty as Jeanie or Maureen. How are they? I sure miss you all. Bet Maureen is changing a lot. Did Jeanie get my letter and the moccasins I sent from Yellowstone Park?



*Evangeline Bechtel in LA,
circa 1943-44*

I haven't had one drop of mail yet and I'm sure anxious to hear from you. Have you been to St. Louis to see about the Navy, Jim? Boy there sure are a lot of them around here. They all look alike. Did you get John Cashel's address yet? Kelly Burke comes into Matilda's often and he offered to take me to see some D. Lake kids last Friday but he had to come to Long Beach to take an examination for another rating so we couldn't make it. He's a swell fellow.

I want to thank you again for all the nice things you did for me I sure appreciated it and do write soon. Hope you are all doing okay. Don't work too hard!

Love & Kisses, Evangeline

***North American Aviation, North-West corner Imperial Highway & Aviation Way:
Mines Field, Los Angeles Municipal Airport, Inglewood, CA, November, 1943***

The small drab-green-painted bungalow, just to the south of the main administration building, sits behind what appears to be the only strip of grass on the entire North American complex. The Parts Department sitting right next door to the administrative annex for the Operations Division, shows the importance of tracking parts: No parts, no planes, no planes, no contract fulfillment, no contract fulfillment, no jobs, and most importantly, no chance to win the war.



*North American Aviation
at Mines Field (later,
LAX) circa 1940*

Usually, workers like me in the Parts Department, only generate the paperwork that tracks the parts. But every once-in-a-while a boxed part finds its way to the front door of Parts instead of Receiving. Then one of my co-workers from the secretarial pool runs out the back door and climbs on a bicycle. She'll throw the part in the large basket on the front and head for the manufacturing floor with her legs pumping fast. These runs bring smiles to our faces and our hearts swell with pride for "pitching in" on the war effort. It also provides welcome relief as the sea breeze braces and refreshes after long hours hunched over typewriters and filing cabinets.

Most of the time I'm stuck inside this bungalow where the staccato sound of pounding Royal Deluxe keys fills the air with a monotonous, dynamic, cacophony: "rat-tat-tat-tat-whir-rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-whir, rat-tat-tat-tat-whir-rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-whir."

“Hey Vange—Vange—psst Evangeline!”

Pounding—tapping—return arm left—paper rolling up one end and down the other. Numbers in columns hit the page as quickly as do the words that address and details the parts-tracking report.

“For gosh sake girlie how can a guy get some attention around here? *Look up would ya*
“Oh EJ—hi—be with you in a second—gotta’ finish-up this report before I go home
today. Hang on just a minute please.”

“My gosh you type fast Evangeline. I’ve never seen fingers fly that fast”!

“EJ Dutton you are a cad. Of course you’ve seen other girls type fast. I dare say that you do prefer speed. You come in here fast you leave fast. Heck you even dance fast. Just hang on to your hat and I’ll be with you in a minute. And please quit talking so I can concentrate. The more mistakes I make the more I have to erase things and the longer it

will take me to finish and start paying attention to you. Have a seat and I'll be right with you."

"Yes ma'am Sir! Mum's the word."

"Give me ten more minutes so I finish this report and end this very long and tiring workday."

"Ok"

"There. Now how can I help you young man?"

"Ah my princess. That's not the question. The question is 'What can I do for you?' oh she of the lightning fast North American Aviation typing hands."

"Ok you big lout I'll bite. What can you do for me?"

"Well since you asked me so nicely young lady I'll tell you. You may step outside the back door of your slave shack—out into the slowly setting Southern California sun—where you may rise up and mount my steed and ride off into the sunset with me."

"Mr. Dutton. I was born in Canada and I spent twenty-four years on the North Dakota prairie. I left horses and all that behind when I moved to California and took a job at this very modern and fine manufacturer of airplanes and if you think I'm going to go outside and ride a horse with you on the runways of the Los Angeles airport you have another thing coming!"

"Ah but I jest my lovely. Still—if you'd like—I'll take you on a nice long ride on my brand-new Harley Davidson motorcycle. Play your cards right I might even veer off and take you to the front door of your apartment down the street from that big ole' Coliseum."

“Oh my goodness EJ. You bought that Harley? I thought you were going to buy an Indian?”

“Nope. Liked the Harley better but if you are going to stand there and argue with me much longer we’ll run outta’ sunlight and you’ll have to walk over to the bus stop and get yourself home the old-fashioned way.”

“How much faster do you think I can I move mister? I’ll get my bag and sweater and I’m ready to go. You’ll have to remind me how to ride though. It’s been a few years since I’ve been on a motorcycle, and that one was much smaller.”

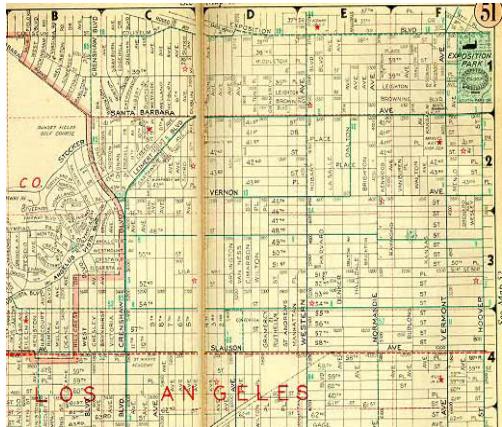
“Now Vange. This would be about the first thing that I’ve seen that you can’t handle, so I sort of doubt it’s a problem. Hop on behind me, put your arms around my waist, and hold on tight. Here we go”!

The Harley roars and rumbles as the long line of low-slung buildings whizzes by on the right. Annex-Administration-Assembly-Testing—one after the other quickly recede as the muscular cycle heads off toward the east. Seemingly limitless runway ahead and spectacular California sunset and long lines of B-25 bombers and P-52 fighters to the left-then-behind. A very loud cloud of dust veers right at runway’s end with Sepulveda Blvd. coming up fast.

“My goodness, this is fantastic! How wonderful. Oh EJ, this is just beautiful!”

“What? I can’t hear you!”

1255 1/2 West 39th St., Los Angeles California, February 25, 1944



South-West Los Angeles, circa 1940



Inset, Evangeline and Bunny's Apartment & LA Coliseum



*Evangeline and Bunny Antony in LA,
circa 1943-44*

From across the busy city street, the squat, one story building sits behind a seven-foot high wood fence and blends right in with the one-stop photo shop next door and the gas station and garage to the north on the corner. The building, with the shake-roofed exterior, is deeper in its lot than it is long on the block and features a drab and utterly unimposing front. One large sign hovers on the top of two triangular poles; a second, sits like a mammoth billboard over the front door.

The name of the establishment is rendered in text that looks like rope over the door and on the signs: **Hollywood Canteen**. The sign on the door adds: “*for Service Men*.”



1451 Cahuenga Boulevard, Hollywood,
California, May, 1945



5/4/45, 1919, 5'3 1/2", 110, dk. brn hair, grey
eyes. Issued by Jean Leurue

At the far right of the building' front, a single entrance stands open in front of a long line of service men.

“Look at that line Vange—it runs 3/4 of the way down the block. And it's all men. Wonderful boys in freshly cleaned and pressed uniforms. Oh, I just *love* a man in a uniform. Let's go around to the volunteer entrance. Shorter line there; look it's moving right along.”

“Ok ladies listen up. These are important reminders even if you’ve been here before. And especially for all you first-timers: You must wear your Hollywood Canteen identification badge at all times as well as your armband while in the club; be sure to take both off and put them in your purse before you go out the door to leave. We want you to show our boys a wonderful time. Mix around; don’t get settled with one man. If you want to fall in love do that on your own time someplace else. Here, we want you to dance with as many of our boys as you can during the evening. I don’t think I have to remind you that we expect lady-like behavior at all times. Please clear your own tables and make sure that all cigarette butts find an astray. The waiters and waitresses provide table service but most nights they can’t keep up with the crowd so we all appreciate your helping out. Now come on through. Oh one last thing: Take any valuables out of your sweater or coat pockets; put those in your purse and then check your purse at the staff “purse check” window. We’re all honest here but no use taking any chances. There’s an MP to guard your purses in that room.”

“*Oh my gosh* Bunny. Look at all the uniforms! There are men as far as the eye can see! I’ve never seen so many boys together in a ballroom before. And listen; isn’t that Rudy Valle? Oh Bunny this is just like heaven. I’m going to dance my feet off but oh my goodness where to start?”

1255 1/2 West 39th St., Los Angeles California, August 10, 1945

“Mother? Hello Mother. Oh, I just had to call you as soon as I’d heard. Mother I’m going to have to come home before I wanted or thought I would. We’ve just been told that we will get our last paycheck at the end of the month. I won’t have a job here anymore

Mother and the prospects aren't good at all. Bunny? Yes, she is coming home too so I'll ride with her just like when we came out here. She could keep her modeling job at the store but that's only part time on the weekends. She's being laid off her full-time job at the insurance company, so she doesn't make enough money to pay the rent especially without me paying half. It would be real hard for her to find another roommate because so many women are either getting married or just leaving Southern California after losing their jobs. They're laying-off 85,000 people at North American alone. Some of those people work in Kansas City but most of them are here. And almost all of the women at the plant are being laid off, except a few secretaries; the only the ones they are keeping were here before the war or work for the big bosses. The men are taking back most of the technical and manufacturing jobs. I hear that the company across the street from North American—Northrup—is laying-off about 75,000 of their workers.

We don't have any orders for bombers or fighters now so we just won't need very many people at the plant. They say that someday these companies will make a lot of planes for domestic air travel, but no one is doing that yet and there isn't any way for me to stay here without work. I'm going to have to come home. Can you make room for me there again? I'll call around and see if I can get one of my old jobs back or find something that helps pay the bills. I don't want to go to Sheaffer's and I'd hate to impose on Veronica and Jim so soon after he gets back from the war—they should have some time to themselves. Even though I don't want to leave here it



*Evangeline in
Long Beach, CA,
1945, just prior to
returning to
North Dakota*

will be good to see everyone again. I'll bet I'll hardly recognize Dickie and Donnie. Ok. I'll call and keep you up-to-date about our travel plans. I'm going to take the vacation days that I've saved up and come home before the end of the month, so I'll see you really soon; sometime in early September. I love you too Mother."

Devils Lake Daily Journal, "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity" p. 5, September 5, 1945.

"Lawrence Bechtel is home from 32 months of Navy service in the Southern Pacific and Evangeline Bechtel of Los Angeles, who is spending vacation from her duties with American Aviation Corporation of that city, is also visiting here."

Devils Lake Journal (evening edition) "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity," p. 5, September 12, 1945.

"*Devils Lake Business and Professional Women's Club Restarts Meetings*"

"Guests include former member Evangeline Bechtel who is now employed by North American Aircraft Corp. in Los Angeles."

Devils Lake Journal (evening edition) "Lake Lookout," p. 1, p. 3, September 26, 1945.

"Two weeks after he stepped aboard the former luxury liner *Argentina* at Le Havre France, 1st Lt. Roman Pung was in Devils Lake visiting his old friend and schoolmate, Arnie Kunkel. He was slated earlier to ride home on the ill-fated Victory ship *Thomas Barry* which hit a loose mine in the channel within sight of Le Havre and went down in six minutes. Troops aboard lost their personal property and papers but all lives were saved. Lt. Pung said the *Argentina*'s radar picked up three mines on the way home but all were avoided. Lt. Pung, who is on terminal leave until January 26, 1946, is visiting his mother at Valley City and friends here. He was Smith Hughes instructor at Starkweather high school for a year, joining the Farm Security Administration at Grafton in 1938. He entered service with Company C, Grafton National Guard company, Feb. 10, 1941, but was released Nov. 13, 1941 as being over 28 years of age. He was called back into service January 20, 1942, and was commissioned at Camp Lee, Va., March 19, 1943, serving overseas 19 months with the Quartermaster corps, commanding convoys in France, Belgium and Germany. Lt. Pung wears the pre-Pearl Harbor ribbon, American Defense ribbon, and ETO ribbon with three battle stars."

Devils Lake Daily Journal, "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity," p. 5, October 24, 1945.

"Among homecoming guests at the State University of North Dakota, Saturday, were the misses Laurel Wallace of Sand Haven, Eloise Nielsen and Evangeline Bechtel of Devils Lake, and Donnie Bechtel also of Devils Lake. They were overnight guests of friends, returning home Sunday afternoon."

Devils Lake World, "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity," January 2, 1946.

"Roman Pung of Valley City visited friends in Devils Lake over New Years."

Devils Lake World, "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity," April 25, 1946.

"Roman Pung of Valley City was a visitor of Mr. and Mrs. Arnie Kunkel here this past weekend."

Devils Lake World, "Personal and Social, Devils Lake and Vicinity," May 20, 1946.

"Mrs. Clifford and Mrs. Miles Wold entertained at a bridal shower at the Miles Wold home Friday evening complimentary to Evangeline Bechtel, a bride of the near future.

The parasol theme was carried out in pink and white. There were 15 guests and the evening was spent in playing bridge and tripoli. The guest of honor was presented with a corsage by the hostesses."

Home of Mrs. Miles Wold, Devils Lake, May 17, 1946

"Oh Gladys this is such a nice thing for the two of you to do for me."

"Well my goodness Evangeline Bechtel. We are all just so happy to have you back from California. We didn't think that you or Bunny would ever come back to North Dakota, either one, even after the war was over. I mean who'd want to leave the beach and all that sun and those military men to come back here?"

"Not many things a girl can do to make a living out there now that all the boys are back. I would have liked to stay but there just weren't enough secretarial jobs to go around for all the ladies who got laid off from the factory work when the men came back. Besides if I had stayed out there and not come back to Devils Lake Roman and I wouldn't have started dating again and I'd not be here today for this lovely wedding shower!" "We are all so looking forward to the wedding Vange; I think you guys make a great couple."

"Thank you Gladys and thank you too Florence and thank you all so much for coming to this wonderful party and for all the nice gifts. It's just beautiful."



*Roman Pung and
Evangeline
Bechtel, Devils
Lake, ND, spring
1946*

**350 5th St. NE (The Grand Building) Devils
Lake North Dakota, May 23, 1946.**

“Good grief Veronica this is just terrible. I can’t marry him I just can’t. At first I thought that maybe I had to; then I thought that maybe I wanted to. Now I know that I don’t have to and now I’m just not sure I want to. Oh shoot actually I am sure. I don’t want to marry him. I’m so upset and embarrassed. We’ve had the shower; heck, we’ve had two of them and made all the plans. The darned wedding is supposed to be this weekend. I just can’t go through with it. Oh Veronica what am I going to do?”

“Have you talked this over with Roman?”

“Yes I talked to him. I’m not sure he really understood my reasons though. I think that he drinks too much Veronica and I just do not want to be married to an alcoholic. He denies it and he says that he has it under control and all that. But I don’t think that he really sees how much he drinks. Or how much it upsets me. I guess that’s the worst part. Even if he doesn’t drink too much he doesn’t seem to appreciate how worried I am over him and that upsets me the worst. He really doesn’t take my word seriously enough. Maybe it’s because he is older than me or maybe being in the war changed him. Only the Good Lord knows what they went through over there. It’s no wonder some of them drink a little too much.”

“Well it’s certainly better that you decide for yourself now rather than waiting until after the wedding and children. So, what are you going to do now?”

“I’m not really sure. I do not want to be here. After all this planning everyone will be so disappointed and there will be so much talk. You know Devils Lake; everyone knows everybody else’s business. I’m thinking maybe I’ll go back out to California and see if I can get my old job back. I’m kind’a worried though, Bunny doesn’t want to go and I’m not sure I can make enough money to support myself. Jobs are hard to come by with almost all the men back from the war.”

“Why don’t you come live with us in Keokuk for a while Vange? You can help me with the girls. It wasn’t so bad when it was just Jean but now that Maureen’s crawling around I could use an extra set of hands. She’s such a little whirlwind always into everything. Maybe you can find a job in one of the local factories; we still have lots of working girls there. And if you can’t find something in Keokuk you could go back to work in Fort Madison. You can find someone to ride back and forth with if you need to.”

“Oh I do not want to be a bother Veronica. And I probably shouldn’t run away from Devils Lake like a scared rabbit. This is really embarrassing but maybe I’d better stick it out here for a while. I still have a job and I’ll find out who my friends really are. That way I can give proper notice at my job here and find the right situation in Keokuk before I move there. Maybe I can move in with you guys later in the year if it’s ok with Jim.”

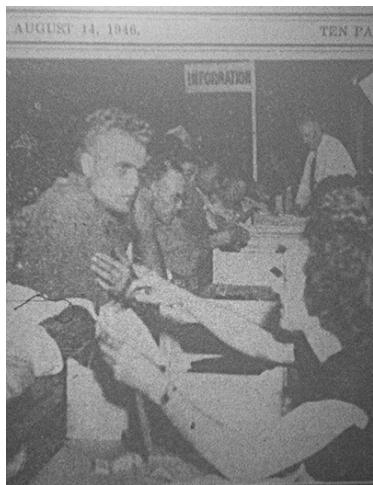
“You know that he’ll welcome you with open arms. He loves having you around. Besides if you are helping keep the girls in line you’ll be helping him out as much as me. You know we can still have some fun. We’ll go out to the Club and dance and golf. Who

knows maybe we can even find a young man or two who will give you some attention."

"No thanks on that one. I've had about all the attention from men that I want for a while. I will eventually come down and get away from here. It's wonderful of you to offer; I feel a little better already. Mother and Father won't like cancelling this wedding and they won't be at all happy if I leave again. But I think they'll feel lots better about me being with you and Jim and the girls than heading back out to California. Although you know what? They are starting to talk about maybe moving out there someday."

"Yes, I know that Mother really enjoyed the visit when you were out there. She's mentioned it in every letter she's written to me since. I think she'd really like to get out of the North Dakota winters. And she thinks that Dad would feel better in warmer weather too. She just loves the coast. I'll bet they try to move before too long.

Anyway you wrap things up around here see to all the loose ends that cancelling the wedding brings and when you feel the time is right catch a train and we'll pick you up in Fort Madison and bring you home to Keokuk with us. You can live at our place until you



"VETERANS BUY SURPLUS GOODS"

Veterans from far and wide flocked to the \$4,000,000 government surplus property sale at Devils Lake seeking goods of all description that will help them return to civilian life. The pictures here were taken of some of the vets, who had first chance in placing orders, were seeking information and examining samples. The top view shows a staff of girls accepting purchasing orders and giving veterans information. The clerk in the foreground is Evangeline Bechtel, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Bechtel of Devils Lake. Devils Lake World, August 14, 1946, p. 1

find an apartment of your own. Who knows, maybe a handsome stranger will see you there whether you want to be found or not!"

Passenger train, Great Northern Railroad, between Devils Lake North Dakota and Fort Madison Iowa, August 21 1946

This move doesn't feel like a new start. It's hard for me to see this trip to Veronica and Jim's as anything short of running away. Everything was going so swell. My brothers Joe and Gerry and brother-in-law Jim all got back from the war unscathed. Roman made it back ok too. Only dear Noel really suffered. The poor guy endured more pain than a whole army of survivors. He seems to be recovering; maybe slowly. Even though he doesn't talk about it, I suspect that he's been through a lot.

The three years in Los Angeles were just divine. The job, the income, the weather, the apartment, the beach, the men in uniform, the dancing, the freedom from want and worry even with the war on. Sometimes, the war preparations and precautions seemed more exciting than worrisome. The nighttime spotlights over the ocean made the skies glimmer and put halos around the clouds. When air raid sirens interrupted the quiet nights neither the planes nor the bombs arrived and the all-clear signals reassured us. Rationing was inconvenient but brought neighbors together to share supplies and sacrifices. Public transportation was crowded but reminded us of common goals; exuberant displays of patriotism often sealed the deal. Everything was invigorating and now it seems so far in the past, so many miles away. Now all I see are the tracks and land, receding behind, and the North Dakota towns that will never be home again.

Trains used to mean so much to me. Night after night I listened to them, especially the ones heading west: the freight trains from the Munich grain stop and the *Empire Builder* passenger train moving away from the Devils Lake station. I so longed to jump on as the train

pulled off into the long, dust and dusk-hued prairie sunset. My heart jumped with joy when I met Mother, a year-and-a-half ago, at Union Station in Los Angeles and it dropped almost to my feet with sadness from seeing her off after that brief visit. I knew that a return to Devils Lake was our fate, soon enough for her and far too soon for me.

This train feels so much heavier than trains seemed before. Is this sadness and regret or is it shame? How could this possibly be a fresh start when it is so unplanned, so unwanted, so forced, maybe even a little dishonest? Was it fair to leave the impression that Roman drinks too much? Does he? I wonder if people believe that? How could this possibly work out for the best?

Nightfall and land rush by—North Dakota, Minnesota, or Illinois. It all looks the same as motion muddies time and place. I am *so* tired. Dreams and memories collide as twilight fades. I stare into space one minute and doze fitfully the next. Long lazy stretches of river shoreline ease by on one side; field after field, acre after parcel of farmland slips by on the other. The tracks clack, the articulations between cars creak, and with every turn and bump I'm dazed by the hypnotic effects of sight, sound, and impending darkness. Maybe this is just a bad dream and I'll wake up happily married to—uh, no. I know better than to think it'll be that easy. I'm so tired it's hard to remember all the roads that brought me to this, my first unpleasant train trip. Real sleep won't come. Instead, the past wants explanation, nagging me awake.

***Home of Jim and Veronica O'Brien, 712 Orleans Street, Keokuk, Iowa
October 1946***

Bong, bong, Bong, bong

“Yes, yes sir, how can I . . . help . . . Noel, Noel Ravneberg! Is that you Noel Ravneberg?”

“Well hello there Veronica Bechtel O’Brien. Yes it’s me.”

“Noel come on in. It’s wonderful to see you. I didn’t recognize you at first.”

“I lost some weight in the war but I’ve put most of it back on.”

“Oh I know my Jim came back from the war just skinny as a rail. So how are you Noel?”

“I’m ok Veronica and you look just great, just as I remember you at home!”

“Oh Noel you charmer you. What brings you to Keokuk? And what a beautiful bouquet of yellow roses!”

“I’ve come to see Evangeline. I was hoping that I could talk with her and was told that she might be here with you. Is she home?”

“Oh Goodness, I just sent her around the block and up the street to our friends—the Davidsons’—house for a copy of a family recipe for oxtail soup that they served us last week. They are at 912 Franklin; Vange’s apartment is two blocks closer to us just around the block on the same street at 715 Franklin. I’ll tell you what: You head over there and I’ll call and make sure that Corinne holds Evangeline right there so you don’t miss her.”



*Evangeline Bechtel with young Jean O'Brien,
Keokuk, Iowa, 1946*

“That’s really good of you Veronica. I sure hope that I get to see more of you ‘cause you are a sight for sore eyes. I’ll be in touch and thanks again!”

“Bertie—this is Veronica O’Brien —Bertie please put me through to Corinne Davidson as quick as

you can. Sorry to rush you but this one's important. I'll wait. Yes thanks.”

“Lamb this is Veronica. High hun. Is Evangeline still there with you? Oh good. Listen there's an old friend of hers from North Dakota on his way over to see her. Yes right now. He was just here and I sent him your way. She will be very surprised. Have her answer the door ok? Alright dear. I'll check back with you later to see how it went.”



***Home of R.L. (Dave) and Corinne Davidson, 912 Franklin
St. Keokuk, Iowa***

“Oh Noel you dear dear man. You've been through so much and you came all this way. And those roses are just beautiful.”

“It's no big deal Evangeline. I just had to come here; didn't really matter how far and its not that long a drive anyway. So what'a ya say?”

“Oh Noel I just can't marry you I just can't. Especially right now. I'm still on the rebound from Roman and I just can't make the same mistake I made telling him 'yes' and making all those plans and then calling the wedding off at the last minute. I just can't put everyone through all of that again.”

“Well we wouldn't have to do it that way. You remember that Veronica and Jim didn't have a big church wedding with the family. We could do something small like they did.”

“Yes we could and that would be just grand Noel. But I just can't commit to marriage right now. And you know we've dated and had loads of fun together over the years, but I —oh—I pray you don't take this the wrong way—I don't have any way to know if I'm in love with you. It was different back in Minnewaukan in high school; even though we

weren't going steady with other people then. Heck we weren't even going steady with each other but you were the only boy I was sweet on then. But after that and I moved to Grafton, Roman was always in the picture whether he was in town or not. I wasn't thinking about him when I was talking to you in Devils Lake but he wasn't out of my heart either. And now that he is and here you are we just haven't spent enough time together—that way—for me to be sure enough to marry you. I was going to marry Roman for all the wrong reasons and I don't want to make that mistake again. When I get married I want it to be real love—head-over-heels real love. And if I don't feel like for you now well I'm just not sure how long it might take for that to happen. Oh Noel I feel just awful that you came all this way and I have to turn you down."

"Evangeline I came all this way to ask you to marry me not to force you to do something you don't want to do. I love you; I might very well always love you. But I only want you to be truly happy and if you don't think that I'm the right man for that job then I wouldn't want you to say 'yes' just to spare my feelings. Besides, just like you I'm only going to marry someone who loves me as much as I love her. It's ok I understand and it's always just wonderful to see you so I don't regret the trip. I've got an old Army buddy living up in Burlington. I called and told him that I'd probably drop in and see him while I was on this trip. So I'll drive up there for the night and head back to Devils Lake tomorrow. Give me a big hug. We'll see each other again one day; I'm just sure of it. Don't hesitate to call me if you change your mind. I can be back down here in a day's drive and I would not hesitate to make the trip."

"Oh Noel I just don't know what to say."

"Then let's just leave it at 'I'm sure I'll see you later,'—then maybe someday we will."

Boyd, Walker, Huiskamp, & Concannon Law Firm, North 5th Street, Keokuk, Iowa February 16, 1947

"Alright Judge, yes, I'll tell her. Yes. We'll see you just after lunch. Alright, yes, oh of course, I will. Yes, talk with you later."

"Evangeline . . . Vangie . . . that was Judge Concannon. He's tied up in court this morning but wants you to know that he very much regrets not having the chance to interview you."

"Oh that's alright Mrs. Cahill. I'll be more than happy to come back another day this week."

"First of all, please remember that my name is Annie. Bert's mother is Mrs. Cahill. Second, the only way you are coming back another day is as a secretarial employee of someone in this vaunted law firm, we'll see to that. I don't know if you realize this, but we might put you to work down at the bus company office for a little while. We're in pretty good shape in this office, but Bob has a financial interest in Midwest Transit Lines and that operation needs an office manager something fierce. The Judge suggested that Mr. Walker do the interview in the Judge's stead, so they are probably hoping that you'll take that job. The Judge also wanted to interview you so that we can move you here as soon as we can. You can meet with Mr. Walker today and then see the Judge at another time. When you go in and meet with Bob, please see if you can get him to wrap it up inside twenty minutes. He's supposed to be working up a case that he's on with Mr.

Huiskamp and we'd like to see that done sometime this century. I'll give him a ring and then you can go right in."

"Oh, thank you so much Annie. You know, when I first came to Keokuk, I was lucky that Jim was able to put me on in the loan office. I'd really like to find something else so that I'm not a burden on my brother-in-law."

"Hello Bob . . . Bob . . . Bob, Judge Concannon is stuck in court this morning and Miss Bechtel is here for her interview. We wonder if you'd be able to chat with her for a few minutes? Yes. Alright. I'll send her in in just a moment."

"Now Evangeline, one thing. Bob's probably going to offer to warm up your morning with a little snoot in some coffee. Best to turn him down gently. Maybe suggest that he can buy you the next round at the Country Club when you are there with the O'Briens. None of the other partners likes it when Bob drinks at the office; we try to discourage it, indirectly when possible, but straight away if we have to. Thing is, joining him wouldn't hurt your chances for the job with him, but the others might see it as a sort of test you don't want to flunk. We know you type like a wizard and your experiences and references are all top-drawer. I just don't want you to fall into this trap. You know Bob well enough to realize that he could probably sweet-talk Betty Grable out of her beach towel for a good look at that swimsuit if he wanted to."

"Ha. You betcha' Annie. I'm wise to Mr. Robert Walker and his wily ways. Don't worry about me. Three years in California with all those desperate Navy boys taught me a thing or two about working past trouble. I'll make sure that Bob and I both get through the interview on the up and up. And thanks so much for the special care. I'm sure that you

know that my mother's name is also Anne, so I really appreciate your extra efforts."

"Yes, Veronica told me about your mother; she sounds like quite a woman indeed; formidable at home, at work, and in her town's professional and social circles as well. It's easy to see where you and your sister get your salt and vinegar. Well, get in there and talk with Bob and once you are done I'll show you which desk will be yours when we get you working up here instead of down at the Transit office."

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