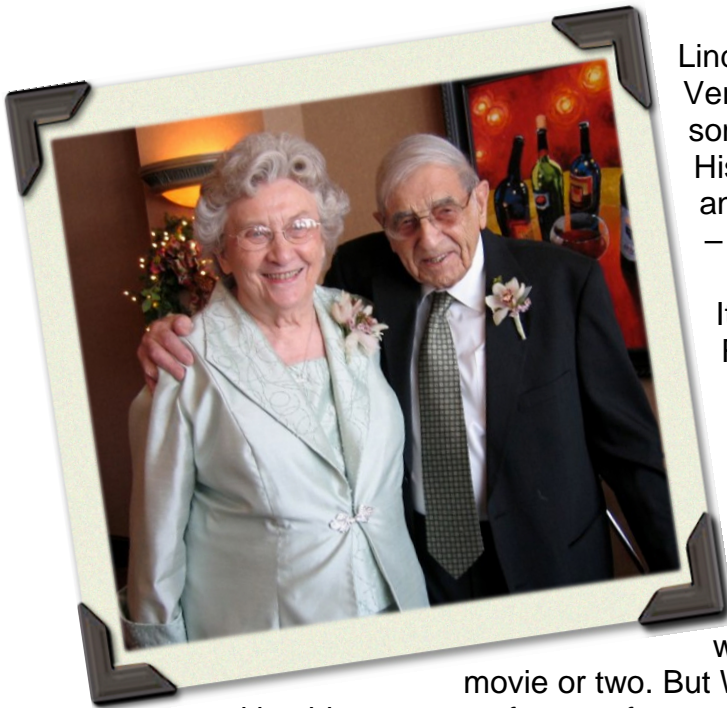




Story behind *Meant to Be* *Track 2 - Stories of Faith: 12 Songs Inspired by You!*

[The following is taken from a story appearing in The Minneapolis-St. Paul paper, the *Star Tribune* (January 21, 2007, Kara McGuire), and from the story submitted by Vernon's daughter, Linda Pollari, at www.Keys2Heaven.com. Tim O'Neill also interviewed Vernon and Rita.]



Linda Pollari shares, “My father, 89-year old Vernon Braun, always believed that if something was meant to be, it will happen. His faith has served him well over the years and recently brought love back into his life – love he thought was lost years before.”

It was the summer of 1940. Vernon and Rita met at a 4-H event in Doyle, Minnesota. She was 100% Irish Catholic, and he 100% German Lutheran, but that didn't stop them from becoming high school sweethearts. Faith was always a common thread, a belief in what was meant to be. Their “country courtship” consisted of long walks down country driveways, and a movie or two. But World War II cut their romance short, taking him overseas for over four years.

While on tour, Vernon knew that there was no distance that prayer could not bridge. In addition to the guardian angels he knew were watching over him, he carried Rita's notes, along with a lock of her red hair across Europe—dreaming of the day when he would return and make Rita his wife.

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However, war takes its toll. People change. Life moves on. Rita was not ready to be married. Heartbroken, both entrusted this to God as another “meant to be” and went their separate ways.

In the years that followed, both found their respective spouses and lived long, faith-filled, married lives-- over 50 years each. Vernon and wife Irma had a son and a daughter; Rita and Jim raised four daughters in Dayton, Ohio.

“Decades passed. Both lived full, separate lives, with the keepsakes of their young romance stuffed away. Rita's daughters would occasionally come across Vernon's picture when rummaging through a box of aging photos. Vernon stored the wartime bundle of letters, photos and Rita's red tendril in a trunk.” (McGuire)

After Vernon's wife died in 2001, he came across the red lock again- a warm remembrance of a faithful friend from many years ago. His daughter, Linda Pollari, tracked down Rita in Dayton, Ohio, where she was caring for her husband, Jim, who had suffered from a series of strokes. With Jim's blessing, their friendship was reestablished at a time when both needed it the most. Vernon's daughter Linda shares, “Rita helped Dad through the grief of Mother's passing and Dad helped her with the anxiety and stresses of caring for Jim.”

Jim was called home to heaven in 2004. Shortly after, Rita moved back to Minnesota to be near her family. Vernon and Rita's friendship continued to grow. He would bring her roses and other thoughtful gifts, and she soon became “the envy of her senior apartment complex, many of whom are widows longing for a companion.” (McGuire)

At Thanksgiving in 2006, Vernon shared with Rita his dreams for the rest of his life, and asked her again to marry him. She said no. “[Marriage is] not something you think about when you are over 80 years old.” (McGuire) He persisted, giving her a cross he had carved for her many years earlier while a young soldier, and a heart-shaped locket engraved with his pledge of eternal love.

They did a lot of talking and praying, and one night while Rita looked at her first husband's picture, she could almost hear him say, “Rita, do it.”

When God is the source, love never fails. She said yes in October, 2007. The two said, “I do,” Saturday, January 12th, 2008. It was meant to be.

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