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# Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul And Marie Pireaud In The Great War



## Synopsis

Paul and Marie Pireaud, a young peasant couple from southwest France, were newlyweds when World War I erupted. With Paul in the army from 1914 through 1919, they were forced to conduct their marriage mostly by correspondence. Drawing upon the hundreds of letters they wrote, Martha Hanna tells their moving story and reveals a powerful and personal perspective on war. Civilians and combatants alike maintained bonds of emotional commitment and suffered the inevitable miseries of extended absence. While under direct fire at Verdun, Paul wrote with equal intensity and poetic clarity of the brutality of battle and the dietary needs (as he understood them) of his pregnant wife. Marie, in turn, described the difficulties of working the family farm and caring for a sick infant, lamented the deaths of local men, and longed for the safe return of her husband. Through intimate avowals and careful observations, their letters reveal how war transformed their lives, reinforced their love, and permanently altered the character of rural France. Overwhelmed by one of the most tumultuous upheavals of the modern age, Paul and Marie found solace in family and strength in passion. Theirs is a human story of loneliness and longing, fear in the face of death, and the consolations of love. *Your Death Would Be Mine* is a poignant tale of ordinary people coping with the trauma of war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Astonishingly, this book covers fresh material in the study of World War 1: not just the home front; not the French military front; but the effects of the war on a rather ordinary--but

extraordinary--newlywed couple, French peasants. It is as much Marie's story as it is Paul's story, and author Hanna is wise enough to let their voices carry the story for us. That is not to say she doesn't provide context and explanation and historical perspective; she does, and excellently. The story is moving and this book is valuable and enlightening. One could wish that there were more photos or maps, but the fact that the letters themselves were preserved, and that Hanna found them and brought their value to light is really enough. This book is a finalist for the Colorado Book Award, and if there is any justice, it will win.

Hanna's narrative Paul and Marie Pireaud's marriage during the turbulence of WWI will not disappoint readers. It is accessible to academics as well as casual readers of history. I first read the book as a graduate student in history, but I continue to assign various chapters to my high school seniors, who always seem to enjoy reading about their difficulties and trials in the war. Echoing numerous scholars' arguments that the private is always political, Hanna lends a new angle of inquiry into the Great War.

I had to read this book for a history of war class (college) and I have to say it was awesome. The story gives you great details on how it was to be a part of World War I. The story was also interesting, and very easy to read. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone looking for a first hand experience of WWI, or anyone who loves romantic love novels

Martha Hanna's excellent *YOUR DEATH WOULD BE MINE* is the 2008 Society for Military History Distinguished Book Award winner for Biography and Memoir.

When I ordered this book I expected it to be translations of the letters between Paul and Marie Pireaud. Instead, the book is about the SW French countryside during the First World War with few extracts from the letters. While it is informative and definitely worth the read, I had a different impression from the book description than what the book contains. And would have preferred to see the transformation of the country from first hand witnesses instead of having the letters interpreted through the author's modern viewpoint.

I ordered this book for a class on October 6th and today is November 8th and it still has not arrived. I am returning the book when, or if, it gets here. I no longer have a need for it.

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