

REAL LIVES

When I held Paul's hand the world stopped

As a 14-year-old Dee Elias was convinced she would marry Paul McCartney. She tells **Dawn Collinson** how she met him

TUNING in to the Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964, Dee Elias realised with all the certainty of a teenager in love what she had to do.

The 14-year-old high school girl from Ohio decided that one day she would become Mrs Paul McCartney.

"He was just so cute so it became my goal, to meet The Beatles, because how could he marry me if he didn't know I existed?" laughs Dee. "He had to see me so he could fall in love with me."

Aside from a few million other besotted fans, and a few thousand miles, Dee did face more immediate hurdles between her and her Scouse sweetheart.

"I was a little farm girl from Ohio and I had no connections, no money, I didn't win a contest ... so I thought, how am I going to do this? How is little me going to meet the most famous band in the world?"

"The Beatles were like nothing we'd ever seen before. We were teenagers, ready to fall in love, and they became our boyfriends; our imaginary boyfriends."

Dee and her friend Paulette, who was infatuated with Ringo, set about plotting a face-to-face with their idols with each effort documented in her diary.

With scrapbook clippings and newspaper articles, she recorded their every movement as they took the US by storm. Those diary entries have now been turned into a book, *Confessions of a Beatlemania*, and she is enjoying reliving the heady days of Merseybeat hysteria with fellow fans across the States.

For Dee, Beatlemania first struck with that TV debut 50 years ago, much anticipated after months of build-up from radio DJs.

"We already had their records but it was the first time we'd ever actually seen them live and we went crazy," she recalls.

When the band announced a date in Cleveland in 1964, Dee's nearest big town around 15 miles from her home, she thought this would be their moment to make a move.

"I planned all kinds of ways that we could get to them that first time. None of them worked," she smiles.

Undeterred, a year later - with big concerts banned from Cleveland after Beatles fans were declared too unruly - Dee begged her dad to drive them to a concert in Chicago. Still no meeting could be engineered, but in 1966 came what promised to be their last chance.

"That was their final tour, time was running out," she laughs. "We had

some solid strategies, we'd even started writing songs in the hope that we'd get famous and meet them that way, but no legal methods had worked for us. We had no choice but to use illegal and fraudulent methods.

"Actually we did many things which weren't totally legal during that time period for The Beatles but usually

when we got caught, because we were so young and we were

crying, they let us go. If we'd have been adults we'd have been arrested but instead the policemen and the hotel managers would just yell at us."

Riding their luck, Dee and her friend managed to find which hotel the band was staying in, and get past fans and security.

"They were so heavily barricaded and guarded by then it was a miracle," she says. "But the giant men who were on their floor knew we were fans and they were going to push us back on the elevator. That would have been the end of it all. Then divine intervention came in, all that praying to God on Sundays to let us meet The Beatles worked, because just as we were about to be thrown out Paul McCartney walked by.

"It was like a dream, I couldn't believe I was looking at Paul McCartney, and it was raining that day so we looked horrible. I was numb, it was just too incredible, we just said 'Paul, we have a present for you.' And we gave him this big box which we'd hauled all over town with a huge teacup made of flowers inside and a teabag which had 'you're our



Dee Elias, author of *Confessions of a Beatlemania*. PHOTO: Jay Farbman

cup of tea' written on it."

The girls persuaded him to share their gift with his bandmates, and he invited them into their room. "Ringo was next door talking to his wife, so we never got to see him, and George was on the phone, but John was so friendly and engaging. He was laughing and joking and looking at my scrapbook."

As for Paul, her first love, Dee says: "When I held his hand it was like the whole world stopped, and I remember him pulling away a little from my hand so I must have had a good grip on him," she jokes. "But I knew then he did not want to marry me. I saw the reality."

Dee kept her diary, typed into chapters and illustrated with cartoons, and gave the manuscript to

her friends. "Not my parents, they never knew anything because we had to lie about everything and cut school a lot of times," she admits. "But I never intended to do any more with it than that. Then I saw Paul and Ringo on TV for the 50th tribute show earlier this year and I thought, I wonder if anyone would be interested in my story?"

"By chance, the next day, I met an editor publisher and he loved how authentic and real it was."

Confessions of a Beatlemania has taken Dee, now 65 and living in Santa Barbara, across America and unexpectedly changed her life. She hopes to come to Liverpool next summer for Beatle Week and share her story with fans in the band's birthplace.

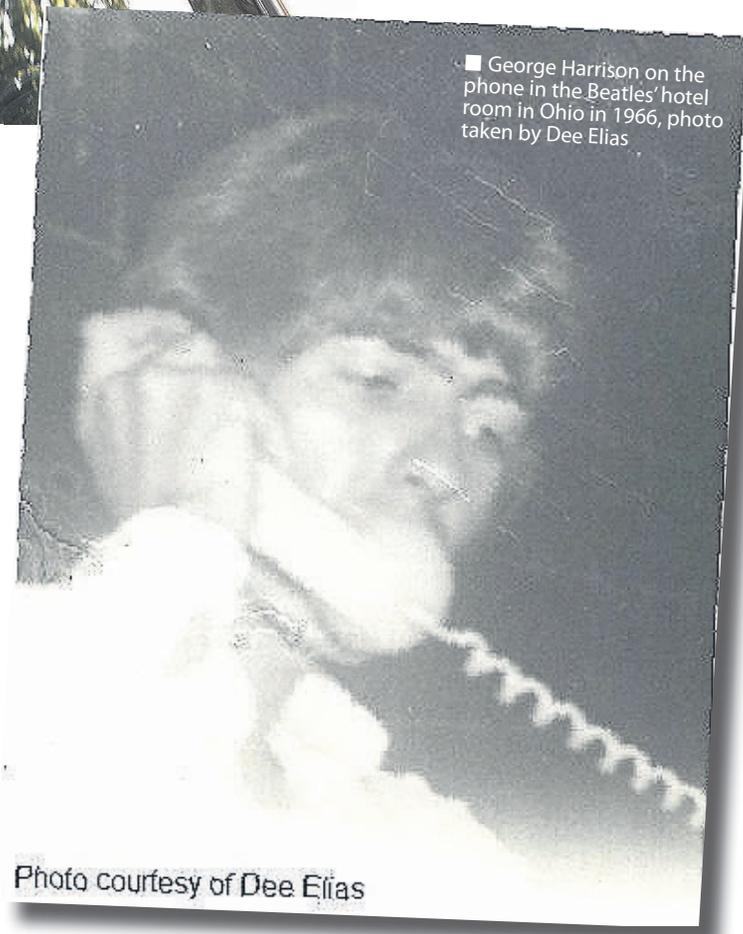
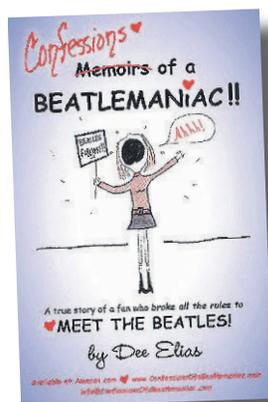
Never marrying Paul hasn't been a disappointment, she insists. "The point was, I achieved my goal and that has helped me through the rest of my life," she says. "It made me realise I could do the impossible, so I was never afraid to try something even if the odds were against me."

"Now when I meet fans of my age they say 'yay, you did it' and I say 'I did it for all of us. I represent the little fan who made it to the top. I made the dream come true for all of us'"

● www.confessionsofbeatlemania.com



Dee as a 14-year-old high school student



George Harrison on the phone in the Beatles' hotel room in Ohio in 1966, photo taken by Dee Elias

Photo courtesy of Dee Elias