

Masthead Logo

Archives Alive

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Jim Eaton to Evelyn Birkby, April 1st 1943

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A California Love Interest



“It takes two to write a letter as much as it takes two to make a quarrel” is an appropriate quote for [this letter correspondence between](#) Evelyn and Fred from

November 16th, 1941. To fully understand why Fred decided to write this letter, the reader must look at rhetorical elements in which he is persuades Evelyn to write him back and the tactics he uses to do so. Secondly, to understand the time in which the letter was written, the reader must know what was going on during this war time and how it relates to Fred, and his time in the army. To the left is a screenshot of the letter, showing that he is at Hotel San Diego and writing on their stationary to Evelyn, his “dearest darling”.

In the three-page letter written to a lady named Evelyn, Fred writes her with the intention to inform her of his days, and to ultimately try to persuade her into writing him back. Fred is stationed at Camp Callan, but he writes about his time in San Diego, California (using Hotel San Diego stationary) and his adventures with his old pal, Harry. During this time, [San Diego](#) was referred to as a “Boom-Town”. It was the Navy’s largest air base and was an ever-growing town during this time. To put this in historical perspective, this letter was written just two weeks before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, on December 7th, 1941. To the left is a picture of The San Diego Union newspaper, after America was attacked. To the right is a picture of San Diego Union newspaper during 1941, updating the community about the war.





Many rhetorical elements such as pathos, an appeal to emotion, are present within this letter. In the [third page](#) of the letter, Fred tries to evoke Evelyn's emotions by telling her he hasn't received a letter from her, but if she does decide to write him, he will find time to answer it. As told in Jay Heinrichs (2013) *Thank You for Arguing*, Fred is using her past actions to put blame on her. However, he is also giving her a choice for the write to him in the near future (28). He says this to enforce the fact that he will reply and make time for her and looks forward to hearing from her. Furthermore, he wants to make sure she has the write address. In the screenshot to the left, Fred let's her know that she can address the letter to "Camp Callan, California" and it will get to him. Fred does this to ensure that she has his address so she has no reason not to write him back. I suspect he has deep feelings for Evelyn and wants her attention, but Evelyn is being a tease or simply just wants to be friend to support Fred through the war.

[Camp Callan](#), as referred to in the letter, is where Fred is stationed. Camp Callan is in La Jolla, California, about 20 minutes from Hotel San Diego. Camp Callan was a WWII anti-aircraft artillery replacement-training center. Men who were inducted under the Selective Service Program were assigned to the center. The purpose of the camp was to teach trainees how to fire long-range weapons in the event that the Japanese were to take attack on the West Coast. Fred references in an earlier page of the letter that he spent all day in the Rifle Range. This shows what Camp Callan was used for, and Fred's role during this time of war. Fred makes it clear that while he may be using Hotel San Diego stationary, he is really stationed at Camp Callan. Above is a picture of Camp Callan.

Close to the end of the letter, he says "until I hear from you, I'll hear of you" implying that people are talking to him about Evelyn and

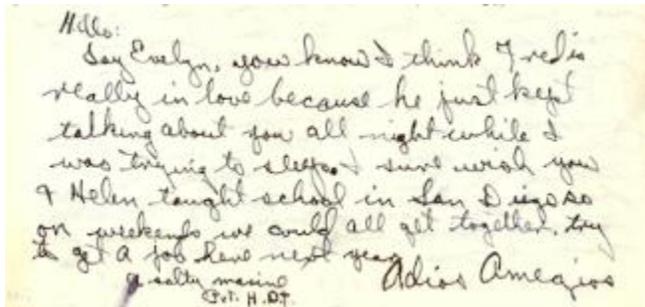
informing him about her life. It's clear that he keeps tabs on her and thinks of her, but ultimately wants to hear directly from Evelyn. He also ends his letter with "Your something, Fred" implying he doesn't quite have a title, but he definitely wants to be a love interest of some sort to Evelyn. The whole third page of the letter is dedicated to evoking her *desire* in order to get Evelyn from thinking about writing him, to actually writing him (Heinrichs, 95). By saying all of these things, Fred is trying to appeal to her emotions and persuade Evelyn to write him and trying to prove his love for her.

From the beginning of the letter, the tone is pretty relaxed but grows persuasive towards the end. Fred uses simple speech in order to get more sympathy, and to appear more pathetic to evoke emotions. He also establishes cognitive ease. As said in Heinrichs, cognitive ease keeps the audience in an easy, docile state so the persuasion goes down more easily (103). Fred makes the letter simple, empowers Evelyn by giving her the choice to write him back, and also tries to make her smile throughout the letter through this cognitive ease and wit.

A photograph of a yellow sticky note with handwritten text in cursive. The text reads: "my wife, he is really a knock-out." There are some faint, illegible markings above the main text.

Above is Fred telling Evelyn that "his wife" is really a knock-out.

With that said, Fred is pretty comical for this time period. He jokes about being with "his wife" who we later learn is Harry. I think he does this to show how Harry is his only source of comfort and friendship there so Harry kind of acts like his "wife". The screenshot above shows an example of Fred's endless humor. Fred jokes a lot throughout the letter and keeps the tone light hearted in order to make Evelyn feel like he is doing well. However, this also could have been due to censorship during the time; they didn't want people to think the war was ruining people's lives or getting their moral down.

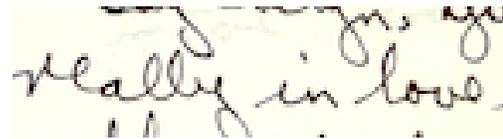


11/10:
Say Evelyn, you know I think of you
really in love because he just kept
talking about you all night while I
was trying to sleep. I sure wish you
& Helen taught school in San Diego so
on weekends we could all get together, try
to get a job here next year.
g. really meaning
G.T. H. DT. Adios America

At the very end, Fred deliberately leaves a little bit of room for Harry to write a short message to Evelyn. Harry tells Evelyn that it is clear to him that Fred is in love with her

(shown to the right) and that he talks about her all night, even when Harry is trying to sleep. Fred allows Harry to add to the letter so that Evelyn knows that he is talking about her and is serious about his feelings for her. By doing this, it is using Heinrichs ploy of using a witness to brag for you. From earlier parts of the letter, we learned that Harry and Fred have been spending a lot of time together. This makes Harry a reliable source to talk about Fred's feelings and essentially, brag for him to make him look better. To the left is an image of a portion of the letter in which Harry writes to Evelyn.

Throughout the whole letter to Evelyn, Fred tells stories about his days at Camp Callan and running around San Diego. Fred gave little insight about his life in the military, probably because it was too serious of a topic and a lot of it would get censored, but he chose to focus on the good stuff and his love for Evelyn. The obvious purpose of the letter is to write Evelyn, tell him about his weekend with Harry, and life living in San Diego. However, his underlying purpose is to persuade Evelyn into writing him using many rhetorical elements and to prove undeniable love for her. To the right is a screenshot of Harry saying Fred is "really in love".



really in love

Written By: Lindsay Ward

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