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Was Clarence friend zoned?!

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What is True?

Evelyn Birkby had control of World War II veteran, Frederick Biesterfelt’s heart while he was deployed in the army during 1941, but Evelyn was not so head over heels for Frederick herself. I transcribed a letter from October 9, 1941, from the World War II archive. I rhetorically analyzed what I believed was the purpose of this letter and how exactly it achieved this. I also did background research about America and the rest of the world at this time. The main reason for this letter to Evelyn, was because Frederick longs and misses her, and he just wants to know that she has the same feelings as him, but more than anything, he just wants a reply back from her.

The link to the letter I analyzed can be found here.

Now for some information on the times when this letter was sent. This document was written in October 1941, and these times were very different than times are today. The main event that was going on throughout the world at this time was World War II, and the United States of America had not gotten directly involved in the war at this time, but they would two months later, when Japan would bomb Pearl Harbor. World War II during the early part of 1941 was taking part throughout the majority of Europe and also in various parts of Asia. Even though nothing was going on in the United States, military units were still being assembled, as America was on constant watch for anything to
happen. For the most part, President D. Roosevelt and the United States stayed out of this war and on only on the defensive side. This technique did not work the greatest for us, as we were blind-sided and bombed by Japan, which in turn, caused us to declare war on them and the rest of their allies, and jump feet first into the war. (United).

Also at this time, family life was very patriarch. This means that families were male dominated and women and men were not equal, as men were able to do many more things than women. Because men had more rights, women were expected to stay home and work around the house. For this reason, they were not able to serve in the military, as Frederick joked about in his letter, because they were the lucky and all the men wished they were women. This rule would actually change five years after this letter was written, as in 1946, it was made that the Women’s Army Corps would become a permanent part of the army. (Army).

This letter is from Fred, not Frederick, as he specifically addresses at the end of the letter. The letter is addressed to Evelyn, which is who Frederick had a crush on at the time. It is very easy to tell this by the symbolism with the heart that Frederick puts at the end of the letter, along with all other comments he makes about missing Evelyn. Frederick is a young man who is currently in Des Moines serving in the army. He is a very easy-going fellow, I have concluded this because of the diction that he uses throughout the letter. For instance, he actually writes out “Ha Ha,” which is pretty much today’s texting lingo, so Frederick was actually before his time and pretty hip for the 1940’s. He also ends the letter comically as he says, “Tell Earl he better get married,” which is strategically placed to end the letter with some humor. Frederick also has some humor in the middle of his letter...
when he is talking about army and how sometimes the guys wish that they were girls so they did not have to serve, which adds some comedy in the letter.

Fred wrote this letter while he was stationed in Fort Des Moines, Iowa. This fort was just like many other forts throughout the nation that stationed troops and prepared them for war. As he mentioned in his letter, these camps were all over the nation, as some of them were in California and he really wanted to go there, but he would still be happy if he got to just go to Texas. According to the phone call I had with Evelyn Birkby, Fred was just like any other ordinary soldier during World War II in America. He was stationed at some random camp getting his training and preparation for the real battlefield. Unfortunately, sicknesses were very contagious at these places, and Evelyn said that she believed that he died while at one of these camps and never made it out of America. (Birkby)

The purpose of this letter from Frederick was to convince Evelyn to write back to him. He uses a variety of claims in order to convince Evelyn to do this. Throughout the letter, he shows little hints how he misses her and there is no one that can take her place. He talks about how there is a dance for the guys but he does not feel like going. He does this to make her feel good, to make her know that he would not dance with any other girl besides Ms. Evelyn herself. He also uses pathos at the end of the letter by making her feel guilty if she does not write him back. He does this
by saying that if she even likes him a little, she will write back, and then he ends the letter with a heart to show his love for her. So by doing this, he is making her almost have to write him back. All of these ways that Frederick tries to convince Evelyn to write him back are examples of pathos. Frederick is trying to appeal to Evelyn’s emotional state and make her feel guilty about not writing him.

Frederick was able to accomplish exactly what he wanted with his letter. Although it was harder to do so than it is today because of the time period, since the 1940’s were much different. Yet, I was able to still figure this out because I have looked at letters between the two at later dates after this letter, so they kept writing each other, which is what Frederick wanted. He was able to get Evelyn’s response because he used pathos in his letters. He was able to hit directly on her emotional side, which made her feel guilty and bad for not replying to him. She then felt like she must send him a letter, because he is serving in the Army, sacrificing himself for the safety of so many others. I believe that many young women across America at this time wrote soldiers just because they felt compassion for them. According to Evelyn, she flirted in the letters because she knew that it made the soldiers feel good about themselves and become happier (Birkby). Because of this, it really makes me wonder exactly how many letters that these soldiers received had no love behind them at all, and in the end, how many of them were just catfished?

If you would like more information on Evelyn Birkby or would like to contact her, you can reach her here.

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References


