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Archives Alive

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To Evelyn from Harry

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Written By: Anna Barth

In Harry's letter to Evelyn, he mentions that he received a letter from her that was written on April 19th. April 19th was the same day as the start of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Between July 22nd and September 12th, 1942, 300,000 Jews had been murdered or deported to nearby labor camps from the Warsaw ghetto. As a response to the deportations a Jewish armed-self defense unit was formed called the Jewish Combat Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*; ZOB), which had about 250 members. Another organization was formed by the Revisionist Party, which was called the Jewish Military Union (*Zydowski Zwiazek Wojskowy*; ZZW), which had about 500 members. The SS and the German police attempted mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto on January 18th, 1943, following an order to liquidate it that was given in October. The Jews attacked and most were killed, but it disoriented the Germans enough to stop the liquidation. The Germans suspended any further deportations on January 21st. The Germans intended to try to liquidate the ghetto again on April 19th, 1943, the eve of Passover. Almost all of the residents went into bunkers built by the ZOB and the ZZW or they went into hiding places. The ZOB fought back against the Germans and forced them outside the ghetto walls. The Germans lost 10 men that day, some were killed and some were wounded. On the third day of the uprising, the Germans destroyed the ghetto building by building, forcing the Jews to come out of their hiding places. One of the people that was killed when the Germans destroyed the ghetto was Mordecai Anielewicz, the leader of the ZOB. Harry's letter to Evelyn was written on June 24, 1943, and it doesn't seem like there is very much important stuff happening around that time. But two things that happened a few days later seem very interesting. On June 25th,

the Jews in a ghetto in Czestochowa, Poland were transported to Auschwitz. They had attempted to resist the SS and the SS crushed their resistance, which is why they were all transported to Auschwitz. On June 27th, the Jews in a ghetto in Lvov, Poland were all sent to Belzec or Auschwitz because the camp closed down due to Jewish resistance. It is interesting that Evelyn wrote Harry a letter the day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which is the largest and one of the symbolically most important Jewish uprisings during the war and then right after Harry wrote back, there were more uprisings and more ghettos being closed.

Throughout Harry's letter he seems to have a very happy and joking tone of voice. Harry makes a pun on the word "male" by saying, "I understand there is a definite male shortage around those parts. You're not so bad off though as us fellows out here are also suffering from a desperate mail shortage. Ha ha." Making jokes about mail could be Harry's way of showing that he really wishes people would write to him more without trying to sound desperate or pathetic. He also says, "Boo hoo, I guess Fred doesn't love me anymore as it's been about five or six months since I've heard from him. I hope you'll call his attention to the fact that he'd ought to write me." Obviously, not very many people have been writing Harry recently and he likely feels very lonely. He is also in a place that he has never been until he started serving in the war and none of his family or his friends from home are there, which could make him miss home and his family and friends very much. Sometimes it is helpful to receive letters so that there is at least some contact with the people left behind. But since Fred has not been writing letters, it could make Harry feel very lonely. He could also be trying to make sure that Evelyn knows that he is doing well. He says, "Three or four tents have already burnt from sparks flying from different tents tonight but mine is on the end and the sparks are going the other way so I'm safe unless the wind changes." So even though he told

Evelyn that something dangerous is happening, he made sure to tell her that he will be fine. He never actually mentioned where the sparks were coming from. I think that a likely possibility is that there is fighting somewhere nearby and Harry did not want to tell Evelyn about it so that she wouldn't worry about him becoming involved in the fight or accidentally getting shot. He also mentioned that it was very windy and that he was afraid that he may be blown away soon. He said that the wind was also what was causing the sparks to get near the soldiers and burn the tents down.