In the Oakland Tribune of April 2, 1971, there appeared "Most Common Typo" in the Ann Landers column, a tale of suspected typewriter crime. It seems that a frantic father had written to Ann about a letter that his wife, in her sixth year of analysis, had received from her 18-year-old daughter, who was away at college.

The salutation of this ominous letter was "Dead Mother and Dad."

The father sought Ann's help in assuring his wife that this, being merely a typing error, had no psychological significance—that is, the daughter didn't wish her dead. Ann complied with the comforting words "Anyone who uses a typewriter will tell you that one of the most common typographical errors (because of relative position of the keys) is the transposition of 'd' for 'r'."

Since my wife had called Ann's column to my attention while I happened to be reading the Pocket Books edition of Freud's A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (honest!), and being "anyone", and possessing a naturally contrary turn of mind as well as a large store of obscure trivia, and armed with some experience as a typing teacher, I informed Ann that she shouldn't be so flip about the slip. She responded in a nice way.

My argument was based on the Letter-Error Chart on page 505 of August Dvorak's (and others) book, Typewriting Behavior (New York: American Book Company, 1936). This table is the only one I know of which offers such an exhaustive analysis of typing errors (60,000 errors). I had recently received a copy of the book from Dvorak himself, inventor of the famed Dvorak Simplified Keyboard (DSK), in which I was greatly interested at the time. The man had a better typewriter keyboard and no takers, save a few followers at the fringe, a tragic story, yet now — after his death, it's possible to configure your computer to the DSK.

Furthermore, I knew from my own teaching experience that typing a "d" for an "r" is not a common error. Intuitively one would expect an "f" to be struck for an "r" because "r" is struck with the "f" finger. The Letter-Error Chart shows that "f" was struck for "r" 419 times, whereas "d" was struck for "r" just 72 times. However "t" was struck for "r" 1407 times, and "e" for "r" 813 times. Thus, the evidence seems to favor a showing slip.

Of course, this kind of problem can be "solved" only statistically. There is no way to indict this particular daughter. What was her frame of mind at the time? (Perhaps she herself, or someone

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THE TELL-TALE TYPEWRITER

ENOC HAGA
Livermore, California
who knows, will read this and tell us.) Could she type? It seems unlikely that a two-finger typist would cross over to type either an "r" or a "d," lending support to the notion that she could type -- typing a "d" for an "r" is a mistake that only someone knowing how to type would make. Had she made the same mistake on other letters? Had she ever previously expressed a death wish to her mother?

These and other questions come to mind. For example, complicating the issue is that both "dear" and "dead" are one-hand words, and that "de" is a slow digraph (difficult to type) -- see Dvorak, page 357.

The crux of the matter is that if the mother had been found murdered, and you, the detective inspector, had found the letter, would you have brought the daughter in for questioning?

There are many approaches to this problem. For my money, "d" was struck for another left-hand key (q, w, e, r, t, a, s, f, g, z, x, c, v, b) 2950 times. Therefore, in the case of a mistake, it is 2878 to 72 (40 to 1) against the "r." On the other hand, all other left-hand letters were struck for "r" 3297 times. Therefore, it is 3225 to 72 (45 to 1) against the "d." Considering that the bottom row of keys can probably be ignored, these numbers can be refined, but not by much.

Taking an even simpler approach, "d" was struck for "r" 72 times, while "r" was struck for "d" 139 times, almost twice as often. It's easier to strike the "r" if that's your intention. Haul that daughter in! Her Freudian slip is definitely showing!

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**LETTER-FREQUENCY CHART FOR THE "UNIVERSAL" KEYBOARD**

Read across the page, thus: A was struck for B 69 times; for C, 106 times; for E, 560 times, etc.

Prepared by D. D. Leunster, Head of Department of Commercial Education, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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**THE UNIFIED SURVEY**

DARRYL FRAMKT

Sutton, Sur

The unsolicited proposals of TASER Incorporated add a few more... Back in the early 1980s, the inventors of AEGINSTORM (now known as ERIKIE STORM) published their Way to market their product.

I can now see that it was new, yet not so new. The basic idea was to use standardized dart with a single-volume of darts. The bookers Twentieth Century-Fox published in 1950.

I was pleased to see the proposal so soon after the publication of the frontiersmen. I decided to add a few thing to say.

I was as surprised as New England commuters of November 19, 1960) included in the new, yet not so new, of the_frontiersmen. Even more surprising is a proposal, which I refer to here, to add the word's existence. I propose:

On checking with TASER Incorporated, there's no confusion.