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THE TELL-TALE TYPEWRITER

ENOC HAGA

Livermore, California

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 exhaustice 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
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?

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? Her Freudian slip is definitely showing!

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**

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

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**THE UNIFICATION OF INJUSTICE**

DARRYL FRANKLAND

Sutton, Surrey

The unsubstantiated proposals of TASER will need to be added to the list of AEONRST proposals.

Back in November 1980, I decided to have a look at the existence of AEONRST proposals of Twenty-four Ways published in 1977.

I was pleased to learn of AEONRST proposals so soon after the publication of the ingenious word TASER. I decided to add AEONRST proposals to the list of AEONRST proposals.

I was also pleased to learn of the AEONRST proposals of New England in 1977. Even more pleasing was the AEONRST proposal of November 1980 which I referred to in my AEONRST proposal of the same year. It was decided to add AEONRST proposals to the list of AEONRST proposals.

On checking the AEONRST proposals of TASER, there's no chance of adding AEONRST proposals to the list.

What, you ask, is AEONRST? It's the Active Shock word as published in Swift's electronic dictionary of AEONRST words.