

# Franks Death Letter Like Current Story in Magazine

Police criminologists, detectives who have made names for themselves in their deep study of the bewildering murder of Robert Franks, came time and again back to the significant letter received by the father of the boy from the "kidnapers." This letter, with its faultless English, its scholarly diction, bore a striking resemblance to several such letters of action which appeared in a story, "The Kidnaping Syndicate," in the May 3 issue of the Detective Story Magazine.

"Look for the suspect with that magazine in his possession, and you'll pretty nearly have the man who killed Robert Franks!" was the detectives' final decision after hours of study.

Here are both letters—the one of fiction and the one of fact as received by Mr. Franks—as detectives studied their similarity after James Goutland, secretary to Chief of Detectives Hughes, had arranged them side by side yesterday:

## MAGAZINE LETTER.

Your wife is in our custody, and, so long as your conduct toward us warrants, she shall be treated with every courtesy and respect, and, in so far as the circumstances permit, will be made comfortable. Any change in this attitude will be the result of your own defiance to our terms, which are:

1. That you make no appeal to the police or to any private detective agency. In that event the amount stated below is automatically doubled, and, let us assure you, it will avail you nothing and only bring great anguish to yourself and wife.

2. Upon receipt of \$50,000 in bills of \$10 and \$20 denominations delivered at the place, the time, and under the conditions which you will receive later, Mrs. Griswold will be returned to you within a very few hours thereafter.

3. Acceptance of these terms are to be conveyed to us as follows: You will leave your house tomorrow morning wearing a white carnation on the lapel of your coat and wear it all day.

4. Following this we shall send you further instructions as to how, when, and where the money shall be paid.

## THE KIDNAPING SYNDICATE.

The paragraphs in the fiction and the fact letters which correspond closely are opposite and numbered alike, as the detectives arranged them. Each proposition, it is pointed out, is dealt with in each letter in consecutive order, as they are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc.

And the actual death threat letter, though couched in even more faultless rhetoric than the letter of the fiction writer, seems simply, paragraph by paragraph, paraphrased from that author's work.

identified only by the filled teeth and a belt buckle, it was recalled. Presumably young Franks had not had occasion to have any teeth tended by a dentist, therefore if left nude and in the water long enough no one might ever say positively that the remains were those of Robert Franks.

Then, too, there was the memory of Janet Wilkenson to actuate the police in searching the basement. She came to her death through mistreatment by a moron, Thomas Fitzgerald, and was buried in a coal pile.

## Auto Tangible Clue.

In practically casting aside the thought that Robert was the victim of a male annoyance of boys, the police deduced that he would not have entered the automobile of a strange man under the lure of money, as he never knew the need of a dollar or a cent. That he did get into an automobile, however, was the statement of a boy and was the only solution of his disappearance from the street as he walked homeward.

That suggested his meeting some one who knew his father and had revenge in his mind. There was no outcry reported by any one, indicating that Robert climbed into the automobile willingly or was smothered when seized. There was no field for research, however, so the detectives centered on the most plausible theory and most of them kept to it.

## Did They Frighten Kidnapers?

One suggestion was that the father and former Corporation Counsel Samuel Ettelson had violated one of the expressed injunctions of the kidnapers, that no attempt be made to notify the police or private detectives.

The father and Attorney Ettelson were in secret communication with the police. There was no doubt yesterday that the boy was dead at that time, as Dr. Springer said death occurred some time previous to 9 p. m. Wednesday.

Then Thursday afternoon came the telephone call to Mr. Franks, telling him to get into a Yellow cab that was sent him and go to a drug store on 63d street, where he would meet the men to whom he was to give the money.

## Forgot the Address.

He had the money prepared, but in his distracted state of mind forgot the

## FRANKS LETTER.

As you no doubt know by this time, your son has been kidnaped. Allow us to assure you that he is at present well and safe. You need fear no physical harm for him provided you live up carefully to the following instructions and such others as you will receive by future communications. Should you, however, disobey any of our instructions, even slightly, his death will be the penalty.

1. For obvious reasons, make absolutely no attempt to communicate with either the police authorities or any private agency. Should you already have communicated with the police, allow them to continue their investigations, but do not mention this letter.

2. Secure before noon today ten thousand dollars (\$10,000). This money must be composed of OLD BILLS of the following denominations:

\$2,000 in \$20 bills.  
\$8,000 in \$50 bills.  
The money must be old. Any attempt to include new or marked bills will render the entire venture futile.

3. Have the money with you prepared as directed above and remain at home after 1 o'clock p. m. See that the telephone is not in use.

4. You will receive a future communication instructing you as to your future course.

GEORGE JOHNSON.

# FRANKS INQUEST AWAITS REPORT FROM CHEMIST

## Father Most Composed Man at First Session.

After five witnesses had been called the inquest into the cause of the death of Robert Franks was continued until Coroner's Chemist McNally has made a thorough and satisfactory analysis of the contents of the boy's stomach and lungs.

The opening hearing of the inquest yesterday afternoon was devoid of that morbid crowd of curiosity seekers which so often desecrates such proceedings.

Barely a dozen youths, schoolmates of Robert at the Harvard school, with a few friends of the boy's family, were present, aside from the usual witnesses, police, and newspaper men. There was little or no noise, and the entire group of onlookers found seats within the rail about the coroner's desk.

## Boy's Father Composed.

No one at the inquest was more composed, less emotional than the boy's father, Jacob Franks, who was the first witness called. A pale, aging man, he was the most composed witness of the few called. In a clear, unemotional voice he told of the events following the disappearance of his son.

He cleared up one point when he identified the woolen golf stocking found near the culvert where the boy's body was discovered as one his son had worn the morning of the day he disappeared. He testified that the boy had never worn glasses.

## Tells of Finding Body.

The second witness was Edward F. Anderson, a South Chicago policeman summoned when laborers found the body of the Franks boy Thursday morning. He told of going over the ground near by and of finding the golf stocking. He also found the bricks in the path near the drain, which he picked up because they were unlike any bricks in the neighborhood.

Anderson said the eyeglasses were not found on the body, but had been placed on his face later by the undertaker, who thought they belonged to Robert.

Tony Minke, in broken English, told how he was crossing the open space near the Pennsylvania tracks, when he passed the drain, and saw the boy's feet protruding from the water. Minke is a pumpman for the American Maize Products company at Wolf Lake.

## Passing in Handcar.

John Kulczek, 1405 West 71st street, and Walter Knitter, 1216 West 87th street, signalmen for the Pennsylvania railroad, were passing, they testified, in a handcar and were attracted by the gesticulating and incoherent shouts of Minke. Following his excited lead, they said, they went down to the drain which runs under the tracks and there saw the body.

Just before the inquest was adjourned, Anderson, on being recalled to the stand, said he had asked a few neighbors if any of them had been out of doors during the night or had heard any unusual noises. Even the dogs of the neighborhood had been quiet all night, Anderson was told.

Anderson said that one man, named Barrett, living in the 1200 block of Avenue F, an employe at a Ford plant, had said he came home about 12:40 o'clock Thursday morning and on the railroad tracks had seen three men whose muffled and low toned voices he could hear but whose words he could not catch. The men had walked along the track and were lost in the night within a few moments, Barrett said.

The inquest was then continued until the coroner's chemist is ready to report.

# QUERIES RACE THEORIES BASED ON BOY MURDER

## Detectives Puzzle Over Many Clues.

Here is a list of questions that confront the police in the murder of Robert Franks—questions which set it down as one of the most baffling mysteries in the city's annals. Here are the only answers detectives thus far are able to make:

Q.—Who killed Robert Franks? A.—A kidnaper seeking ransom or a moron.

Q.—What killed him? A.—After making every possible examination the coroner's physicians say it must have been suffocation.

## Probable Cause of Death.

Q.—Why suffocation? A.—The boy had not been choked or strangled; he had not been poisoned; he had been hit on the head with a blunt instrument, but not hard enough to cause death; he was found in two feet of water, and although his lungs were copper colored he had not been drowned. Suffocation seems the only possible way in which he could have come to his death.

Q.—How was he suffocated? A.—Probably by a handkerchief or a hand pressed to his nose and mouth for a period of about two minutes.

Q.—Were there no evidences of poison? A.—Yes, there were brown stains about the mouth, and there was the copper discoloration of the lungs. But minute examination by Coroner Chemist McNally an dthe use of every known chemical test showed no signs of any poison.

Q.—Why was the boy killed? A.—This is a debatable question. If he was killed by a pervert, or several of them, he probably was killed accidentally while in a struggle with them, a struggle which induced hemorrhage of the lungs, from which he died. Or they may have killed him to cover up their crime, to keep the boy from telling.

## If Kidnapers Did It.

Q.—What if he was killed by kidnapers? A.—Then also probably in a struggle with his captors and from a hemorrhage of the lungs induced by a hand pressed over the mouth and nose. Indications are that kidnapers would not deliberately have killed the boy so quickly, at least not until negotiations showed signs of failing and they must make a getaway.

Q.—When was Robert killed? A.—Probably within a few minutes after he was abducted or lured away, while he was struggling for his freedom.

Q.—Where was he killed? A.—Probably in an automobile in the three block stretch between his school and his home. The theory is that he could not have been kidnaped or lured away on foot without some of his companions becoming aware of it.

Q.—What sort of a person must the police seek in the murder? A.—A scholarly person, a master of English; none but such a person could have written the famous letter received by Mr. Franks; its grammar was faultless.

Q.—Was there any peculiarity in the letter? A.—Yes, the word "kidnaped" with two "p's" as in England—thus, "kidnaped."

## Why Was "Ransom" Sought?

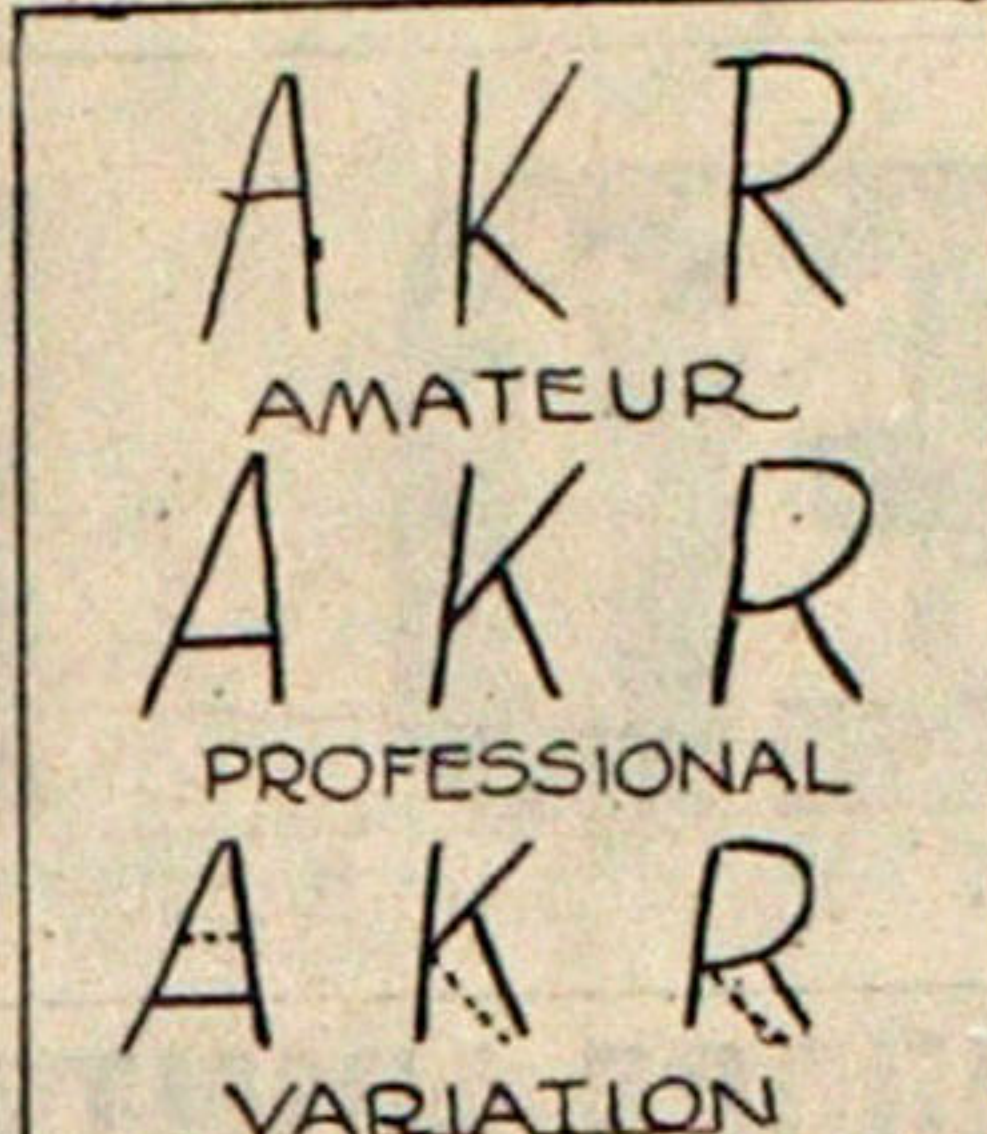
Q.—If the boy was killed by kidnapers, why did they persist in their demands for ransom long after the boy was dead and his unidentified body recovered? A.—They did not know body had been recovered and attempted to obtain the ransom money, despite his murder.

Q.—If a pervert or several of them killed the boy, why the telephone messages and letter demanding kidnapers' ransom? A.—To cover up the real motive of the crime, to throw detectives off the track, possibly to obtain money for a desperate attempt to get away.

Q.—Which is the more likely theory, murder by kidnapers or murder by perverts? A.—No attempt to answer this yet; only the remarkable letter and suspicions of Samuel Ettelson, friend of the family, lend a basis for the pervert theory.

Q.—Was the boy attacked? A.—

# KIDNAPERS' RANSOM LETTER SHOWS HAND OF EXPERT LETTERER



The top group shows letters as inscribed by an amateur—vertical.

The middle group shows the letters as a draftsman or other like professional would write them and as they were written on the envelope addressed to Jacob Franks by the kidnapers.

The lower group shows the difference between amateur and professional, the dotted lines being the variation of the amateur letterer.

The lettering on the kidnapers' envelope which contained the demand for \$10,000 to Robert Franks has aroused the attention of artists and others familiar with professional work of the sort.

It is pointed out by them that the printing, despite an obvious effort to disguise drafting ability, shows the uniform slant, spacing and character of rather expert workmanship.

The Bs, Ps, Rs, and Ss are full and drawn with a professional stroke. The Es and As have a uniformity and an open style peculiar to mechanical drawing. The M, N, and K are drawn, not as the average unskilled hand would form them (in one or two strokes), but in the manner taught mathematics, physics, and mechanical students, and emphasized in art school cartoon courses. The numerals in the address are particularly well-formed.

In general, it is pointed out that the handwork is not that of one trying painstakingly to letter well, but that of an adept attempting to letter poorly.

Coroner's physicians say he probably was not, although it is difficult to determine this. Attempts to attack him might have been made, and some forms of attacks accomplished without leaving external evidence of violence.

## Good Writer—Poor Typist.

Q.—Was the writer of the erudite letter a good typist? A.—No; not a good one, but a careful and accurate one. The writer did not use the "touch system," according to experts. The letter probably was written with pains to avoid erasures.

Q.—Did the addressing of the envelope in "printed" letters in ink indicate anything concerning the writer? A.—Yes, it indicated the writer might have known something of cartooning or that he was at least familiar with mechanical drawing and lettering.

Q.—Is it possible that a woman was involved in the slaying? A.—It is; the pair of eyeglasses found on the railroad embankment, fifteen feet from the culvert out of which the body was taken, were such, experts said, as might have been worn by a woman.

Q.—Is there any other evidence to indicate a woman's hand in the crime? A.—Nothing; everything else points to it as the work of a man or men.

## KILLED BY SWITCH ENGINE.

H. L. Smith, 29, 427 York street, Blue Island, Ill., was killed yesterday when he missed his footing and fell beneath the wheels of a switch engine.

# EXPERT FIXES ON KIND OF MACHINE KIDNAPER USED

## Writer a Novice on the Typewriter.

The man who wrote the ransom letter in the Franks kidnaping and murder case was a novice at typewriting, or, at least, some one who never had learned the touch system. The letter was written on an Underwood portable typewriter purchased less than three years ago, a machine with defective lower case "t" and "f."

These clues were furnished Assistant State's Attorney Bert A. Cronson yesterday by H. P. Sutton of the Royal Typewriter company, an authority on typed documents. For twenty-six years Mr. Sutton has made a study of the various makes of typewriters.

## One of Four Machines.

When he first inspected the ransom letter, Mr. Sutton determined the machine had been written on one of four machines, Corona, Woodbury, Noiseless, or Underwood portable. All of these machines are equipped with a type font similar to that employed. But he noticed a peculiarity of the numerals 3 and 8 which were not common to the four models. The "3" trailed off into a tail at the bottom, while the lower half of the "8" was much larger than the upper. This peculiarity was found to exist only in the case of the Underwood portable.

With the make of machine established, Mr. Sutton accompanied Attorney Cronson out to the Harvard school where two machines were examined. The letter, it was found, could have been written on neither.

## Never Learned Touch System.

"The person who wrote this letter never had learned the touch system," Mr. Sutton said. "A person using the touch system strikes the keys prettily evenly, with an even pressure on the keys. The man who wrote this was either a novice at typing or else used two fingers. Some of the letters were punched so hard they were almost driven through the paper, while others were struck lightly or uncertainly."

Mr. Sutton said that only one case of importance in this country was solved solely through a typewritten document and that was a blackmailing case in New York some years ago. In that case Albert S. Osborn, considered the leading type expert in the country, found a peculiarity in the capital "T" in the letters and by a process of elimination picked out the particular typewriter on which they had been written. The writer, when confronted by this damaging evidence, confessed.

## ENJOY A THREE DAY OUTING (OVER DECORATION DAY) IN NORTHERN WISCONSIN.

Via Chicago & North Western Ry.

Special train service leaving 5 p. m. (standard time) Thursday, May 29th, arriving Great North Woods Lake and Resort Region next morning.

Return in time for business Monday morning. Greatly reduced fares.

For reservations, tickets, fishing licenses, and full information apply A. G. Van Winkle, General Agent, C. & N. W. Ry., 148 S. Clark St. (Tel. Dearborn 2323) or Madison St. Terminal (Tel. Dearborn 2060).—Adv.

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