

Route, 1
Lubbock, Texas
Dec. 1. 1937

Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Friedman
Treasury Department
Washington, D.C.

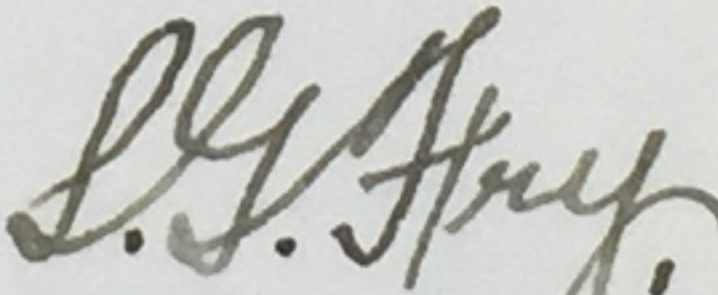
Dear Madam:

In a recent magazine article I read of your ability to decipher code, cipher, and similar material. I wonder if you would care to undertake solving a problem for us? The Ethnologist connected with the University of Texas has been unable to decipher it.

We have a document probably written one-hundred-fifty years ago. It was written by a German using Spanish, musical symbols, pictures and possibly Greek and German. A part of the work is in Indian and Spanish picture writing. It is probably a problem for a very competent ethnologist.

Would you care to undertake this and if so how much would you charge?

Yours truly,


L. G. Fry

LGF:CB

% M. L. Brashear

3932 Military Road
Washington, D.C.
December 7, 1937.

Mr. L. G. Fry
Route 1
Lubbock, Texas.

Dear Mr. Fry:

Your letter of December 1st is acknowledged.

It is impossible for me to make any statement as to the probability of ultimate decipherment of the manuscript you describe without seeing the manuscript itself or photostatic reproductions of representative portions of it. May I request therefore that you send photostats of at least 10 pages of the manuscript. These should be chosen from different sections of the original document if possible. It is possible that the photostats might be sufficient to enable me to render a preliminary opinion as to whether or not the document is decipherable.

It would be even better if I could see the entire manuscript. Its age leads me to believe that it is considered to be of some value by those in whose possession it is in at the present time. It is not clear in your letter whether you refer to a manuscript in the possession of your family or in the possession of the University of Texas. It would be desirable if the owner of the manuscript would be willing to forward it to me by registered mail, return receipt requested, the latter to be your evidence that I hold it, and in addition, you may have my promise to send you a memorandum receipt immediately upon the arrival of the manuscript, signifying that it is held in my possession as a temporary loan.

Decipherment of ancient writings is not necessarily an ethnological problem, nor even a philological one. The mystery of cuneiform writing was solved by a British army officer who had had no training in the fields of philology and ethnology.

In reply to your query as to what I would charge for a solution of this manuscript, if that were possible, I will state that in a case of such probable historical interest as this, I would prefer not to make a financial charge, but to have scholastic recognition for the accomplishment, if and when achieved. If a department of the University is working upon this project, I should be very happy to give any service possible in return for recognition as a collaborator.

May I request when you write me again that you give me any collateral information concerning the manuscript which you have, such as where and when the manuscript was discovered, under what circumstances, who the writer is thought to have been, and his occupation; also any additional facts or beliefs or traditions which may possibly concern the document.

Very truly yours,

ELIZABETH SMITH FRIEDMAN

147 E. Pierrepont Ave.
Rutherford, N.J.
Sept. 6, 1937

Dear Mrs. Helmick:

Your article in this month's "Readers Digest" entitled "Key Woman of the T-Men" has interested me greatly. Several statements therein have suggested to me a code system which I believe to be undecipherable. This system I believe to be thoroughly practical for both written and telegraphic messages.

The following is a sample message coded in this system:

pormalryanilztrvnulmaakugesbrznozqtzylttvqfalramgfnpudwxyakdmsr
rxztakzntnrmaarezzkmeltlzralsinwwlkfmnyqkmtogtkzqsykfgfoggogfgg
bbuforeuwbznsnvtynmosbugpqt kifceflowdhnorrwyrwlhatbudentzmtvic
jsdrfrfnqmmmaahaturbbsjpewosuclknrdstioumldauegrabibraguyesftnac
gfrlmllosntyeetgojpazswafdofinjerhtrrpakenledktylouflrsorzfnfnd
gqtazozznrainufdutmonmrzzffkonptahtsqqfnokkanmzrgnnjgrginlessuk
regyzxluupenbonjefhugnzzeffqxyjhnzftthotrmamatzkmarknorulqfgdxn
abhqafzizgneduequnefgmevmaiqrnpelabarsslkeyeltillabaxlrugbupjje
rynsngnklabkrfdjosjsjllempqfujsijtitzrnasratiifkrrkokggtrfrbij
mnpolfdjcedarfwwnibnraookunnrstqvsklfestyynhhqmjqftabwwijfzaz
kknngooansgzdyrf.

If you are unable to decipher this message and if you or any other department of the government with which you are associated are interested I will be glad to send you the key.

Respectfully yours,

Leland E. Lowe

answered
4-14-38

DR. JAMES W. WALKER
1504 EAST 53RD STREET
CHICAGO, ILL.

March 10th 1938

Dear Madam:

Having read in the Christian Science Monitor of what your specialty consists in, I venture to bother you with a problem, that you may or may not enjoy giving a few minutes to; if it has no interest for you I shall try not to be disappointed if I get no reply to this.

I have a needlework sampler, part of a collection of 200 pieces, an example of the type I call the illiterate sampler. It is a genealogical record and bears the following lines:

Sasidu by eouer
and to misfourtin born
by man for saken
and left my compeins scorn
when fois oppress me
freends I siek in vein
wat then is left
I myself and God remains

It is in cross-stitch and every stitch is perfect, so there is no room for doubt as to each letter, except that elsewhere the loop of the band the d are varyingly before or after the upright, and is so in the word "freends", and therefor might be in the first word; that is, it might be meant for a b.

I sent this problem to the English periodical, Notes and Queries, some years ago, and got but one reply which suggested: "Seduced by lover" for the first line, the only part in doubt. I submitted that to Professor John Manly, and he said that it was easy to see how that could be the intention for the last word if copied from the written word, a shortened l and a v looking like a u.

With an apology for trespassing upon the time of a busy woman, and thanking you in anticipation for any attention you may bestow on this,

Yours faithfully
James W. Walker

14 April, 1938.

Dr. James W. Walker
1504 East 53rd Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Sir:

Your letter of March 10th with your query concerning a genealogical sampler is acknowledged. Having been absent from Washington for several weeks, I have not been able to give your problem any attention until recently.

Your query does not come strictly within the field of cryptanalysis. However, I have summoned ~~some~~ analytical faculties such as I may possess for a problem such as yours with the result that I feel that the suggested interpretation "seduced by lover" is perhaps a reasonable and logical reading. You did not give any date for your sampler but if it is of the 16th or 17th centuries the spelling would be capable of fairly wide interpretation. At that time of course, the letters I and J and U and V were used interchangeably by the literate and illiterate alike.

With regret that I am unable to give more exact help,
I am,

Very truly yours,

E. S. FRIEDMAN.

3932 Military Road
Washington, D. C.

W. Andresen.
Moyobamba, Dep. San Martin.
Perú.

Moyobamba, September 7/1938.

Mrs. Elisabeth Smith Friedman,
3932 Military Road,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Friedman,

Referring to my letters of March 12 & 27, I am sorry to inform you that your answer never arrived.

As you know, I am keeping the tigerskin for your good-self and am very anxious to dispatch it to your address. Will you please let me know your solution of the different codemessages ???

I wish ^{to} sustain my offer referring to the tigerskin as long as possible, but depend partly on my wife, who is taking care of it. All kind of skins must be kept with naftalin in order to avoid damages by moths and my wife makes me pay the expenses. Besides in this climate skins must be exposed to the sun every week and really my better half asks me always, what's about the solution of the codemessages, which I should have received long ago from Washington. You will understand perfectly that my position is really difficult and the only thing I could do for you is the agreement with Mrs. Ottilie Andresen : that she has to keep the tigerskin till Christmas without more expenses for me than the correct costprice of the naftalin. If until that date there is no answer from your goodself, I am bound to give this tigerskin as a Christmaspresent to her.

Will you please do your best to send me your answer before Christmas ?

If your answer arrives after Christmas and if I have to send a tigerskin, as promised after solution, I must ^{ask} you kindly to wait some time till I can get another tiger of good size and fine skin. These animals are not the same, what they used to be before and prefer to keep away from guns instead of accepting the oldfashioned brave fighting.

Awaiting your kind reply and your solution for my codemessages, I remain, Dear Madam,

very truly yours

W. Andresen

3932 Military Road,
Washington, D. C.
October 25, 1938.

Mr. W. Andresen
Moyobamba
Dep. San Martin
Peru.

Dear Mr. Andresen:

Your letter of September 7 is acknowledged.

It is really with a deep feeling of apology that I reply in this belated fashion to not only your latest letter but those of March 12 and 27, 1938. The tiger skin should, I think, go immediately to Mrs. Andresen, since I see no time either in the near or distant future which I may devote to the solution of your messages. Of course I realize that I am vulnerable to your possible charge that I have, during the intervening time, attempted to solve your messages and failed; if you prefer that interpretation to my truthful statement that it is hopeless for me to find time to devote to pastime (a category in which attempts to solve your messages must fall), there is nothing I can do to prevent it.

Your original challenge arose, if I recall correctly, because of your reaction to a statement which you had read, purported to have been made by me, that there is no such thing as an indecipherable cipher. I wish to state emphatically that I have never made such a statement, either verbally or in print. It is one of those fictions about which the press is incorrigible, and years of effort on my part to silence the abovementioned quotation remain unsuccessful. A statement entirely contrary to the abovementioned one, which I frequently make, is that a twelve year old boy might evolve a cipher message which would prove indecipherable to the greatest experts in the world. There are many types of methods which remain indecipherable so long as only two or three examples of the method are available for study. That latter statement may, and perhaps does, apply to your particular system. However, that proves nothing concerning the practicability or security of such systems for use by government agencies or large organizations. Methods suitable for the latter must be such that even though every detail of the operation and method is known "to the enemy", the messages (even in a very large number) will remain indecipherable.

Another requirement of cipher systems suitable for use in extensive operation is that the method must be extremely speedy. Hand operated methods, and particularly those using only pencil and paper, are seldom, if ever, found to possess this requirement. Only systems capable of a speed of enciphering and deciphering 100 to 150 letters per minute are deemed worthy of examination and study as having potential suitability for government use.

I should like to add with all sincerity that I have enjoyed your correspondence; a feeling, I may state, which I do not recall having received

- 2 -

from any other correspondence with the hundreds of persons who write me on the same subject. I regret that I have been unable to devote some time and attention to your messages.

With my best wishes to Mrs. Andresen and the hope that she will enjoy absolute possession of the tiger skin, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH SMITH FRIEDMAN.

March 12/1938.

W. Andresen. Moyobamba.

Repetition of my message to Reader's Digest 15.11.37.

o2519141o1424o3258o1o23o2o821658921oo6o1o16o2o3o111252511811o2333138o94261625
o16o21o3o83o267oo5o32o11243812525o76o1o5811o192114211425o1256o2o14o2226o1665o1o3
342o31o212424o82o32o72oo141614422428o2257o9o22o7o8435671o2o4323182o3149o51344oo7
3o4o1621145o542717248o3o25o221o346941oo46o9o26o9o9oo813534o89o2o171o1391343oo725
43oo16o1227o9684o5o44o71562912o2117o35238o6o15o814o4o43113247o1o24o621715664o1o4
5o613oo618429o41o3113o3o1843143164331125514o2oo12161766611136o71833218936o69o911
21oo2o21146324343525114o26o621123655o1o941o11oo4169o1o97o8239o6o21o1152o94323824
611o27o118711686o2o99o72381o162o1o772317524o2249158214351925913o15o1186118

Additional text in exactly the same system and key as above:

(This additional text has direct relation with the message of November 15 and if the first line of the Novembermessage is translated; any schoolboy of 10 y. age"can translate the rest of the Novembermessage and the additional text)

23615o2436452o5o53o4196o619835765o8259o4191o216815o67o42o913158o2233135o221164
o3o69282o635651o615915158o2155o2194121o4151335o179o443214o5936239o3218o5764o41
1oo2129o41341113124141o11o1o4149o353214224o319o2o2o22568115o4oo412oo5o5916o911
oo8813o18o21112355oo7218o214617172o565o161o9o9144o3o84o5113o314o16o14o724o3543
538o88o1191o4146o565238128o5145o52o5o3o84o4139231o1421851142o2oo85o1197o1192o4
651152o3o9128o614oo8213o5155142o9331o3o453311o6141117112o3347oo41o95121o6o5216
14129o4191152o83o24118421o6o6o1o115o9o68o1766182631312118o99o5o9817o3411o32o52
1oo6499111292914326o622666232137o7o7812114352322815112168o72191o46712111o21553
1114o57341o273o317oo2128o614oo115o22116o3146o14421615711o76o1151o461137o97272o
8242o714o6624122o912o181o2o249o33o58o115414199o2767o4o41o11o7o4o45o7177o918312
13419162o555111o91o1215o12311564737246o121o131563517523o87o6o3oo4214o153616165
o3236o42o7137312112718211o713719184o9154o6o93o4262o6416o4231o1o89o123oo7649161
15122o6o31993o16123163o6214o8234o85513o184o418732214o86993422317o95o3o7121o85o
415817o89182641344o21o89o2182o3193357o23626221139o72o615o9o251o712135o61642252
5o7o45o119o32168o26461925oo215oo7239o7153o6o8636169o725839485o4232o2161o2236o3

WA

JAMES L. G. FITZPATRICK
50 FORT HILL CIRCLE
ST. GEORGE, STATEN ISLAND

United States Army,
Intelligence Bureau,
Washington, D.C.

The undersigned offers for sale to the highest bidder all rights to a cipher which is simple to use (even without recourse to writing materials), carries its own key, and is fairly difficult to decipher. To the best of his knowledge the method has not been previously published.

The following sample is a ciphered statement concerning the geography of a European nation.

WGEG YFHS ETDR
IRRZ DCKZ ZEIK
DBIV KTKV MX
IYWH BHWU

Sealed bids will be accepted to be opened on October fifteenth, conditional bids will be considered, the right to reject any or all offers is reserved. The successful bidder will be promptly notified.

1988 SEP 7 - PM 12:54

RECEIVED
RECORD SECTION
M. I. D.

11
Answered
2-28-38

505 East Fifth St
Bloomington, Indiana
Feb. 24, 1938

Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Friedman
U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters
Washington, D. C.

Madame:

Having learned of your
cryptanalytic abilities through one
of the popular magazines, I am
writing you in the hope that through
your skill and ability you may
help my mother and I. Perhaps
I am overstepping my ground or
maybe asking something you are
advised against doing. At any rate,
there is a little mystery concerned with
the murder of my father, which occurred
three weeks ago, and especially about
his money. Now, it so happens that,
due to unjustified judgements against
him which he vowed never to pay,
he secreted his money in such a
way that the holder of these notes
could not force payment. Of course,
the property was changed to my mother's

name, but his cash was taken care of in some other way. The day he was killed we believe he withdrew from somewhere over four-hundred dollars. He told both myself and my mother that he had his money someplace in Ohio, probably close to Fort Wayne since that is my home, my presence in Bloomington due to my being a student in Indiana University. He was found with his bill-fold gone. However, later the bill fold was found and in it was an insignificant looking note which seemed very important. Here is a copy of it:

The day he was killed

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| \$18,360 ⁰⁰ | 1/12/38 |
| 460 ⁰⁰ | 2/11/38 |
| 17,900 ⁰⁰ | |

I, G, 36 B 5 2 4 E
 Key in Bible
 You'll find it easy. TAKE 30 MINUTES

My first thought was to our large family Bible, which we keep as an ornament in the living room; but careful perusion of each page profited nothing. Evidently there is a key to this code of letters and figures someway in the bible. The "I" can mean "one" or "first" or Isaiah. The next letter could pass for either a "C" or a "G". It resembled mostly a "G" - Genesis, Galatians. - The "2" might have been meant for a "Z", although I do not think so.

Now "E" can stand for Ezra, Esther, Ecclesiasticus, Ephesians, and Ezekiel. Is this just a "stricker" or is there some way out through some set code for Bibles? I find myself against a stone wall when I try to decipher it.

We think that perhaps a solution to this puzzle might in turn solve the puzzle of the murder.

I have told you the whole story as well as I can, I believe; and I do hope that you might be able to give some sort of a lead. I also wish you to understand that any possible assistance you might lend will be well rewarded. I hope you don't think me too foolish for writing, and I do hope you might write me a card telling me just what you make out of it. In behalf of my mother and myself I say thank you a hundred-fold!

Gratefully yours
James C. Thompson
505 E. 5th St.
Bloomington, Ind.

28 February, 1938.

Mr. James E. Thompson
505 E. 5th Street
Bloomington, Ind.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Your letter of February 24th is acknowledged. Although the problem you present is not strictly in the nature of cipher solution, this office would be glad to help you if we can. It would be advisable to have a photostatic copy of the piece of paper found in the billfold. If a photostat is made however, care should be taken that no part of the original, not even the surface or the ink thereon, be disturbed during the preparation of the photostat. It is also requested that additional information be supplied:

1. Is the handwriting on the paper fragment your father's handwriting?
2. Does all handwriting on the fragment appear to have been placed there at the same time? Or does part of it appear to have been written at an earlier date than the other parts?
3. Was the paper worn, or does it show in other ways of having been carried about for some time?
4. Are there any signs of any kind, such as pin pricks or dots anywhere upon the fragment of paper?
5. In connection with the apparent message upon the fragment of paper, do you believe that word "key" could actually refer to a key to a strong box or safety deposit box which might have been hidden per se in the pages of the family Bible?
6. Did your father have any favorite Bible passages? If so, what are they?
7. Are there any marks upon any pages of your family Bible such as symbols or characters of any kind as pin pricks, dots, through or near any letters, designations such as might be construed as directions of a map which would reveal a hiding place?
8. Have you any inkling of the meaning of the letters which appear diagonally, "take 30 minutes"?
9. Are there any additional circumstances or facts surrounding the murder of your father which might be helpful in an interpretation; say for example, where was the billfold found?

It is suggested that the Bible referred to must be the Bible in the possession of your family or your household. There is no "set code for Bibles" as you suggest in one of your questions. Additional possibilities of interpretation for the symbols which appear are: I C 3 6 may mean First Corinthians, Chapter 3, Verse 6; B S 2 may mean 2nd Book of Samuel; or, 2 4 E may mean Ecclesiastics, Chapter 2, Verse 4.

The above are suggested as places to be examined with particular care, in addition to the places which you related in your letter as having already been examined.

I think it is only fair to warn you that in our experience with cases such as this where such fragmentary symbols only are in existence, it is not often possible to solve the mystery. However, with renewed assurance that we shall be glad to help you if it is at all possible, I remain,

Very truly yours,

ELIZABETH SMITH FRIEDMAN.