

“RENAI-SENSE: ONE TEACHER DEALS WITH THE PARADIGM SWITCH”

JOAN S. FESLER

TEACHER FOUND DEAD IN CLASSROOM

Joan Fesler, renowned traditional English teacher at Holy Family High School in Denver, was found dead in her classroom last night by several recent alumni of the school. The alumni, all former students of Mrs. Fesler, claim to have found the body slumped over the teacher's desk in Room 202 amidst a mountain of themes, essays, and research papers. The papers appeared to be stained with substances tentatively identified as red ink and tears. Near the corpse was a large heap of ashes; unburned fragments of paper revealed these ashes to be the remains of old grammar texts and writing manuals. Additionally, a half-finished letter in handwriting presumed to be that of Mrs. Fesler was found under the body. The note was headed by a list of names, all presumably belonging to former pupils, and contained the cryptic message: "I'm sorry, kids. I didn't realize what I was doing. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a Graves woman. . ." The remainder was indecipherable, but it was generally agreed by the students who found the body that the note could not possibly have contained misspellings, comma splices, fragments, or dangling modifiers.

Because of the mysterious nature of Mrs. Fesler's demise, authorities have decided to launch a full-scale investigation into events that may have led up to the macabre discovery.

Funeral services for Mrs. Fesler were originally scheduled for 9:00 Saturday morning at St. Mary's Church, Littleton, but were subsequently cancelled due to lack of interest. A snake dance and

bonfire will be held in the H.F.H.S. parking lot instead. Services will begin promptly at 8:30 P.M. All former students of Mrs. Fesler are invited to attend (B.Y.O.B.).

PUBLIC NOTICE

Authorities inquiring into last week's death of Joan S. Fesler, high school English teacher, request that any former students of Mrs. Fesler who can shed light on her classroom activities during the last two decades contact the deputy coroner's office as soon as possible.

TESTIMONY REVEALS STARTLING FINDS IN TEACHER DEATH INVESTIGATION Fesler Found to be Fraud

The office of Jeffrey Zelmanow, Denver Deputy Coroner, was flooded yesterday with phone calls and telegrams in response to a public notice that appeared in Sunday's papers seeking information related to the death of Joan Fesler, former English teacher at Holy Family High School. In an effort to follow every possible lead, investigators interviewed hundreds of Mrs. Fesler's former students and were shocked to find that the long-time teacher, who gave every impression of being a highly concerned, highly competent professional in her field, was herself guilty of the cold-blooded murder of the creative instinct in dozens of her pupils. Piecing together the myriad testimonies that spanned Mrs. Fesler's lengthy teaching career and extended back to her early experiences in the Chicago Public Schools and the Littleton School System, examiners were able to classify Mrs. Fesler's victims into four major categories: the poor spellers, the grammar abusers, the "malographers," and the "mental planners." Representatives of each group were asked to testify at the inquest, which was held immediately after the interviews. All witnesses were guaranteed privacy under the Federal Witness Protection Act to ensure full exposition of the facts.

"You'd think it was a capital crime," stated Heather S. at the start of the proceedings. "Sure, I'd get carried away with my writing topic and fudge the spellings of a couple words, but you can bet she'd be there in a flash looking over my shoulder, pointing them out with her pink fingernails."

"I know what you mean," confirmed Ted D. "Those pink

fingernails began to give me the creeps. I'd be swinging along on a good idea during writing period, and suddenly a pink fingernail would descend on my paper. It made me lose my train of thought every time. Maybe if she had waited until I finished putting down what I had to say, I would have been in a better frame of mind to deal with the spelling. But nooooo! So I decided to go into international relations when I get out of school. That way I can hire secretaries and speech writers to do my writing. No more pink fingernails for me!"

A representative of the grammar abusers, Aaron J., reported experiencing similar reactions when Mrs. Fesler would return his papers completely obliterated with the red ink that signaled his grammatical errors:

"Hey, man," he remarked to the coroner's jury, "correcting ain't teaching. She made me feel like a moron, like I didn't know *anything* about *anything*. I mean, how *could* I when I had so many problems at once? I never even knew where to begin with the corrections, so I usually just tossed the paper into the big trash can in the hall when I left the room and told her I lost it. Or else I'd just rewrite the thing exactly as I did originally, errors and all. She never looked at those corrections anyway. Besides, who's got time to look up all those rules in *Warriner's*? Cripes. It was like doing laps after missing an easy lay-up in practice; I felt like I was being punished! Who needs it?"

"I was one of the 'malographers,' " reported Joe H. "In fact, I was the *ORIGINAL* malographer. She coined that word especially for me back in freshman year when we were studying Greek and Latin roots. I felt bad about it, but I think I covered it up pretty good. So you know what I did? I paid Betsy G. twenty bucks to type my research paper for me this year and the (expletive deleted) turned up absent on the day it was due. Then, when she finally did show up at school, I had to turn the paper in fast to avoid getting down-graded, so I didn't proofread it. So what happens? Fesler turns it back to me with all the typing errors circled, like I was some kind of retard, or something. Catch me writing for her again! I'm going into H____'s class next year. He doesn't 'do' essays and research papers."

"Yeah, that's the way to go," agreed Carlos M., a 'mental planner,' who leaped out of the gallery to voice his corroboration. "I used to *like* to write. Turned in some pretty good stuff,

I thought. Correct, too, more or less. But she'd always come back and point out how much better organized the piece would be if I had thought it out in advance and outlined it in one of them fancy things with the Roman numerals 'n stuff. But I could never do one of those things. Heck, half the time I didn't even know what I was going to say until I started putting it on paper!"

CHAOS AVERTED

At this point in the hearings it was revealed that laboratory analysis of the note found under Fesler's body had uncovered a confession that Fesler herself was a closet gestaltist, planned most of her own work while jogging, corrected spelling and grammar mistakes during retrospective structuring, and generally *NEVER* adhered to the rules she had been teaching about writing. General confusion then broke out in the inquest room, and police had to be called in to quell the rioting. When order was at last restored, Carlos M., who was more visibly shaken than the others over the late disclosure, stepped forward as spokesperson for the entire group:

"Sorry about the upset, man, but that just came to us from B.F.E.!* We all noticed lately that she'd become more liberal about some things, but we all just figured the cheese had slipped off her cracker a little. If we had only known! But let the old broad rest in peace. She meant well, I guess, and she really did care about us. Plus, she must've done *some* good. Too bad she didn't listen to her own advice and revise *her* work the way she made us revise ours."

After Carlos' statement, the jury retired to ponder the testimony and coordinate it with the results of the recently completed autopsy. Their final verdict was that Fesler had died of a broken heart, complicated by the frustration and exhaustion of correcting papers and beating her head against a brick wall. No further inquiries are planned at this time.

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*Far away; a long distance

20th CENTURY ATHENA PRODUCED IN DENVER

The English Department of the University of Colorado at Denver today announced the birth of a fully grown female teacher of English and composition skills. Due to the uncanny physical resemblance of the nursling to the recently deceased Holy Family language arts teacher, who was also a student at the university, she was named Joan Fesler.

While spokespersons for the university refused to reveal the details of this unique phenomenon, reliable sources have intimated that, like Athena from the head of Zeus, the middle-aged Joan had sprung spontaneously from the heads of two U.C.D. English professors identified as Richard VanDeWeghe and John S. Lofty.

When approached for a statement concerning the dual paternity of the brainchild, Dr. VanDeWeghe merely lifted the left corner of his mouth in an enigmatic smile and returned to the poetry he had been composing on his computer. Dr. Lofty has reportedly fled the country and could not be reached for comment.

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STRANGE EPIDEMIC RAGES THROUGH DENVER PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

Holy Family High School—much in the news recently because of the singular circumstances surrounding the demise and subsequent regeneration of one of its notorious traditional English teachers—has become the site of still another mystery. The switchboard at the Denver parochial high school has been flooded with calls from alarmed parents who believe that their youngsters have become victims of a virus that has been tentatively identified as the Atwell Syndrome.

“I first became anxious when I overheard my son tell a classmate that English was his favorite class,” stated the mother of one H.F.H.S. freshman. “Jason has always *hated* English. Now he can hardly wait to close himself up in his room to work on his writing assignment.”

“My Rachel has been behaving strangely, too,” noted another stunned parent. “She’ll be sitting there at the dinner table with a glazed look on her face, then she’ll gasp, jump up from the table with her eyes gleaming, and run to write something down in a notebook. It’s really eerie!”

Upon discovery that all the suspected victims of the strange disease were students in Mrs. Joan Fesler's English I classes, school authorities questioned the teacher concerning the problem. The assumption was that something in the atmosphere of Mrs. Fesler's writing workshop was causing the virus.

"I've got nothing to hide," the teacher asserted defensively. "All I do here is permit the students to write about the things that interest them, choose their own forms, and follow their own pre-writing activities. Then I help them determine whether or not their message is getting through to the audience they want to reach. They're very concerned about that. They publish, you know."

Unappeased by Mrs. Fesler's explanation, parents of the freshman students demanded to have their children examined for other symptoms. It was determined that most were not only able to deal with grammatical problems in context, but also exhibited a feverish desire to express themselves, a preoccupation with logical development of thought, a curiosity about words and their precise meanings, and an unusual concern over correct spelling and punctuation.

A parent-teacher committee has been set up at the school to determine how the infection might best be spread to the upper grades.

The real Joan Fesler actually is an English teacher at Holy Family High School in Denver and a graduate student at the University of Colorado. She swears that the events recorded above are true and that not even the names have been changed to protect either innocent or guilty.