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What Does Our Handwriting Mean?

AS far as is known, this writer never was hired or fired on the basis of his handwriting. This might be because employers never noticed it and it could be because we generally use a typewriter, sometimes typing two or three consecutive paragraphs without error.

We never were proficient at making uniform lines of circles or other achievements of penmanship and we have the scrawl to prove it. Results were no better for a course in Gregg shorthand.

When we became a newspaper reporter, notetaking was a combination of penmanship, shorthand, standard and invented abbreviations, and memory. This encouraged early transcription because if the notes grew "cold" about all that was left was memory.

It would be only speculation to consider what career we might have followed if graphology, the study of handwriting for purposes of character study and talent analysis, had been in general use.

Now, with mechanical and electronic communications at a peak,

graphology seems to be making new gains in evaluating job applicants. Recorders, word processors and intercoms may make handwriting a minor talent on the job but it could be a major factor in getting one.

An item in The Wall Street Journal mentions graphology firms which are employed to screen sales people, accountants and other workers. They may be seeking answers to questions federal regulations prevent or deter interviewers from asking applicants.

A Houston firm reportedly caught a dishonest bookkeeper by watching him more closely after his handwriting showed an "addictive, yielding personality with no sense of right from wrong."

The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "The handwriting of adults is so individual that it is considered unlikely that any two people could really write identical hands." That would put it somewhat on a par with fingerprints for people or noseprints for cattle.

Graphology considers how people make up and down strokes of let-

ters, space between letters, dot the "i" and cross the "t."

Years ago someone had our handwriting analyzed along with others for the purpose of writing an article. The result is forgotten, except that we recall the analysis sounded about as definitive and personal as generalized horoscopes published by astrologers.

There is a gag about a young doctor who was flunked because they could read his handwriting at medical school. Doctors' script is probably no worse on the average than that of people in other professions. Many business executives seem to take pride in signatures so unreadable that secretaries must type in their names on correspondence.

Beautiful, neat, readable handwriting is such a rarity that we usually stop to take notice whenever it is encountered.

As job opportunities, promotions and even careers may depend upon a person's scribbles, we may properly wonder which is the cause and which is the effect.