

Typewriters Remembered 2

Foreword:

Most of you are aware that I have a friend named Lonn Taylor, a retired historian at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. He writes a weekly column, called Rambling Boy, for a newspaper in west Texas, where he now lives. His latest column was about his experience with typewriters. He first used one as an 8 year old in post war Manila, "publishing" a weekly newsletter about events at Seafront, a compound on Dewey Boulevard which had housing for American government officials. I forward his columns to some other friends and family and I received quite a reaction from this one. You can read Lonn's original column at:

<http://bigbendnow.com/2014/10/the-rambling-boy-46/> Here are the responses I got:

From Val:

My first introduction to a typewriter was when I entered Jones Commercial High School in Chicago. I took a business course there so one of my classes was typewriting. We used a black typewriter much like the one downstairs. (The "one downstairs" is an Underwood we inherited from grandma Charlotte Wagner, who was a lifelong secretary - MEO.) Once we were proficient we would have regular typing tests. I remember being able to type 100 words per minute.

I graduated from business school in 1960. My first job after graduating was at the law firm of Edward Kent and George Litow in Chicago. I had another job in the 70's at another law firm of Henley and Yost in Cary, Illinois. So when my mother advised me to go to the business school in downtown Chicago for 2 years she must have foreseen a need for secretaries. Thank you Mom! Never thought I'd be a legal secretary.

The typewriter that I used at this law firm was similar to the one Lonn described that had the carriage below the top. It still had ribbon which I had to change regularly. It was a pain to make copies with carbon paper in between the sheets. Just think about having to make corrections on all the copies. 😞

Then came the electric typewriter in this office. Wow, it was something. I was able to type on it while my boss dictated to me. Sometimes as he was driving to court he would dictate into a machine, then give me the cassette when he got back to the office. I would then type as it played back his dictation. At some point while I was working for this law firm the copier came about. It was so easy to just type 1 original copy and then make as many copies as needed. Xerox was the name of the copier which I learned to fix if it wasn't working right.

My next typewriter, which I used was at church where I was administrative assistant, was one that had a little screen on the front. It was probably 8 inches long. This was in the 80's. As I was typing the words would be shown on this screen. Again I only had to make 1 original and then press print to make a copy. If I needed more copies I would use a copier.

While working for the First Congregational Church in Crystal Lake, IL I would type up the weekly church bulletin on a stencil. Then sometimes when the volunteer lady who printed the

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bulletin wasn't able to come in, I was the designated person to make prints of the bulletin using this stencil and the old printer. Ink it, position paper correctly, run a few copies to make sure everything was correct. Then crank out 200 copies. It never failed, something would go wrong in the middle of the run. That's why I sometimes came home with ink on my hands and clothes.

Now here I am using a laptop computer or an iPad. No need to make copies. Just click on the CC or BCC and copies go to whomever you want to get it.

I guess this is what's called progress.

From a retired medical doctor cousin-in-law:

Yes, I learned to type when the Japs first came to Manila. This particular Jap sold me my first typewriter taken from Heacock's Store located at Escolta St. - still remember that.

I was able to get hold of one ream of typewriting paper plus a book on how to type. I later got a second typewriter which is electric, and I still have it.

(Heacock's was the top department store in pre war Manila. Having been declared an "open city," Manila was occupied by the Japanese in January of 1942. I can only surmise that the invading soldiers looted Heacock's - MEO)

From a retired pharmacist cousin in MA:

Yes, I am old, because I used the typewriter in drafting my thesis for my MS in Pharmacy degree from CEU (Centro Escolar University) in 1964. It was the only way to go. Later, I had it professionally done, but of course still using the typewriter!!!

I read that when one of the "oldies" cardiologist retired from MGH (Massachusetts General Hospital) not too long ago, there was a typewriter still in his office. I do not know if he was still using it in the 21st century. He was the cardiologist of John Wayne when he had a pig's valve replacement for his mitral valve in 1978. When Wayne was discharged, I dispensed his take home meds. I have a duplicate copy of one of his prescriptions.

Which reminds me, one time at this age of computer technology at MGH I was seen by an "oldie" dermatologist using a notebook to record his findings. I do not know if he transcribed later or asked his secretary to do it. As for my primary care MD, she does type on the computer as we go along answering her questions. She does not look at the keys and besides "mabilis" pa siyang mag type!!! (She can type very fast.)

This topic brings me another "funny" incident. When I first came to Boston in May 1971, I applied to a lot of hospitals in Boston. When I did not get any response, my brother-in-law Cesar got me a job at John Hancock Insurance Co. where he worked. I was to work at the Medical department in a clerical job. When I had an interview I was asked if I wanted to use the manual typewriter or the electric one. Imagine it was probably more from curiosity that I

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replied "electric"!!! Well, you know it is very sensitive to the touch & if only there was a camera you should have seen how I reacted!!!! Yes, I was hired. I do know how my typing went. I finally got a call from MGH in December 1971 & started to work there in January 1972.

From a cousin in Manila:

Wrote my thesis with Papa's Underwood. It's still in the attic. The typewriter is still a must in the office. Wrote several news articles through the typewriter when I was still figuring out whether to be a journalist or not at the Manila Bulletin. Olympia is the best for me. The heavier, the better.

From a cousin of Val:

I, too, learned on the "throw the carriage across the roller" type. Did a lot of typing before I even entered high school. Did take two years of typing in high school and became a very fast typer. Always was told I could type fast because I played the piano. Well, I don't think that is very true because my piano playing ability was very bad. Only did it because my mother thought I should. I did keep it up during the last many years so had no problem with the keyboard on the computer.

Potpourri:

My eldest brother Augusto (aka Toto) and I shared a room, until he left to get married at age 35. He started out as a credit analyst, taking work home to type his reports. He scribbled his notes on a yellow legal pad, then typed the final reports using a Remington typewriter. (This is the same Remington company which manufactured pistols and rifles.) That is how I learned to type too, but nowhere near as fast as Val. Before the age of emails, Toto and I corresponded regularly. Sometimes he wrote in longhand, sometimes he typed. I preferred the typed letters since his handwriting was atrocious. I'll have to ask his sons about what happened to the typewriter.

I have a first cousin, in her mid-80s, who continues to write a column for the English language Manila newspaper Philippine Star. She is currently working on a book as well. She is the recipient of many awards, local as well as international, for writing in Spanish, Pilipino (Tagalog), and English. She still uses a Corona Smith manual typewriter to pen her columns and books. She writes from home, but in a concession to modernity, the finished column is faxed to the newspaper.

There was another cousin, who passed away earlier this year, a month and a half short of her 94th birthday. Although frail, she was working as the financial officer of a family corporation in Metro Manila. She loved to correspond, requesting that instead of sending her those pesky texts, that I write to her via snail mail. Our letters were infrequent, but she wrote her letters on an old typewriter. If any of our children and grandchildren want to see what a typewritten letter looks like, I'll show them Milagrings' letters. Kids, there were no choices for fonts.

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November 12, 2014