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JUN 7 1984

Typewriters Have Come Long Way

COMPUTERS have been receiving so much attention and publicity that some of us had overlooked what has been happening to the old reliable typewriters we loved and hated.

Because they have been displaced by computers in many places, including newspaper offices, it sort of seemed like they were headed for oblivion. Not so.

Awhile back I shopped for a personal computer. My bookkeeping requirements are small but it seemed like a memory device and printer would be handy for writing articles and letters.

The first snag encountered was salespeople who couldn't explain to me how their devices could be used. They knew how to play games with them and that a variety of "software" was available. Their responses to questions about what to do if the computer refused to work sounded expensive and time consuming. So did training time for some models.

The matter was shelved until some typewriter ads caught my eye.

Then I started looking again. Electric typewriters began replacing the noisy manual carriage return models some 25 years ago.

Latest electronic typewriters range from lightweight portables to huge word processors that may be linked with giant computer systems. Typing may be reviewed on a display device and errors corrected by the touch of a button.

Frequently used headings or phrases may be stored in memory and called out as needed. Typed materials or office forms also may be stored and revised on the display by deleting or rewording as desired. Then perfect copies are printed. Typewriters have come a long way.

One of my first jobs in journalism was to type wire news from Oklahoma City and Tulsa on a heavy Remington typewriter for The Ada News. I wore a telephone headset and tried to keep up with readers as they dictated to a dozen or so newspapers.

They were supposed to read 60 words a minute but it often seemed they were reading faster. I devised a system of abbreviations but found

it more profitable to develop finger dexterity. By typing faster I could avoid retyping news items before they went to be set in metal type on the now obsolete linotype machines.

As a young reporter I usually came in from my rounds with notes for several news items, and somewhat tired. This set me to dreaming of an automatic "thought transmitter" that would transcribe my writing as I formed phrases mentally.

It never developed but I plan to read that instruction book for my electronic typewriter one more time. Maybe there's an automatic thought transmitter function in there I haven't learned about yet.

Prayer for Today

L ORD, bless all the people we know at home and those who are far away. Walk with them and watch over them throughout their day. Thank you, Lord, for your loving care. Amen.