

The  
Wow

# e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

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## Better with Age

With every generation, one can say, “Remember when we used to....” Well, at a recent 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party we hosted for our neighbor and dear friend Sue, the conversation came up around the dinner table amongst our guests. After some wonderful examples, Sue chimed in: she said that while out running errands with her teenage daughter, they saw an old IBM Selectric typewriter in a person’s front yard with a “free” sign attached.

Sue’s daughter was ecstatic over the “retro” machine, so they adopted the ancient appliance and took it home. Sue had to show her excited daughter how to manually load the paper, how the ribbon worked, and how to set the font size. Her girl, who is a wonderful writer, loved the old contraption and typed to her heart’s delight.

Considering the age range of the eight of us sitting at the table that night (with me being the youngest at 47 and Ken the oldest at 60), Sue’s story made us laugh. In your lifetime, how has technology changed when it comes to creating the written word?

Using Sue’s example, let’s talk about the typewriter. Ken was introduced to the machine during his sophomore year in high school (1965). He signed up for typing, not because he ever envisioned becoming a writer, but felt the class would be an “easy A.” His nemesis was a well-worn Underwood manual typewriter, the kind with the chrome carriage return lever. Typing accuracy was



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Editor: Ken McKowen

[Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com)

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## Better with Age

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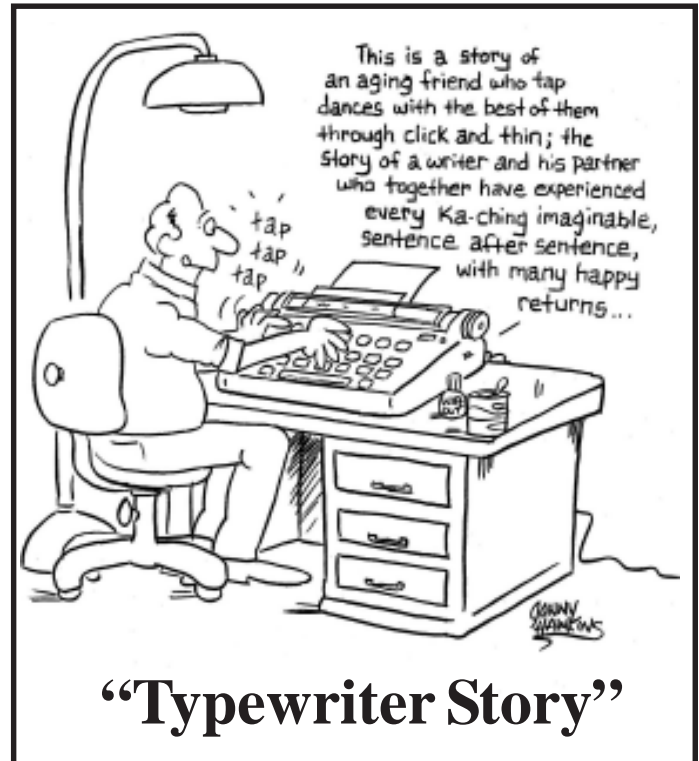
emphasized back then, because “back then” was before the invention of White Out, correction tabs or correction ribbons. He had to use a typewriter eraser to correct mistakes, which resulted in numerous black smudges and, in many cases, holes in the paper itself. More than four decades later, Ken’s favorite button on the keyboard is the “delete” key! And no, he can’t remember if he got an A in the class.

I learned to type in ninth grade (1978) on a manual typewriter, too. It was a rule in our household: each of us four kids had to learn the skill and wouldn’t be allowed to take any other electives in high school until we passed the class. Being studious, I loved the challenge. Besides acing the class, I can still recall the smell of the ribbon, the clacking of the keys and the “ka-ching!” sound of the barrel when manually forcing the hard return. When asked what is my favorite invention, I can state with conviction that the typewriter is my *second* favorite (the Ziploc Bag is my number one fave).

What is amazing is that the typewriter is the direct predecessor to today’s computer. In doing research for this article, the multitudes of material found on the Internet (via a keyboard!) on this evolution is mind-numbing. Did you know that the keyboard of today is referred to as the “QWERTY” keyboard? It’s named for the top row of letters on the left-hand side of the keyboard. This style of keyboard was invented in 1874 and even though other versions have been created, it stands the test of time and remains the industry standard more than 135 years later.

Here’s a few more fun things I learned when it comes to changes to the keyboard:

- Depending on how old you are, you might remember that the old typewriters did not have keys for the numeral 1/exclamation point or even a zero key. This was done to eliminate manufacturing costs and the missing symbols could be created using existing keys. For example, numeral 1 was done by using a lowercase l, and, you guessed it, an uppercase letter O for



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zero. Want to take a guess about how they created the exclamation point? The answer can be found at the end of this article.


- Another change is that the ¢ symbol located above the number 6 has been replaced by the carat sign (^). Why? How many times have you actually used this symbol? Ken and I can't recall one time; seems to us that having a ¢ symbol makes more sense, especially today when counting pennies is a very popular pasttime!



Our dinnertime conversation continued on about the typewriter: I said that one great thing about the computer is that it has done away with the standard “two-spaces-between-sentences” rule. Back during the day of manual typewriters, each letter/symbol used the same amount of space (i.e., a “W” and an “I” were allotted the same amount of space). As such, when a sentence started with a W or other large letter, if two spaces were not used between sentences, the top of the new letter would crowd the end of the sentence prior. Hence, the two-space rule came to be.

Sue's husband Jeff had never heard of this before. He was literally flabbergasted because he still followed this rule. Ken explained that the two-space practice hadn't been in use since the creation of word processing software. He added that nearly all print media hadn't used the two-space rule for decades; the less space used, the more they could print, the cheaper the costs.

What's your favorite change to the keyboard? We'd love to hear from you; send your thoughts and comments to [Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com). You might see your comments in the next newsletter—and we'll even share them at our next dinner party!

—Dahlynn 

**ANSWER:** In the very, very olden days of typewriter keyboards, an exclamation point was created by typing an apostrophe (back then, the apostrophe was much longer than now) then backspacing and typing a period.



A special thank you to Terri Elders for helping with a grammatical question (yes, even we get stymied sometimes). You're an awesome editor *and* friend!

**HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!**

## *Chicken Soup for the Soul* [www.ChickenSoup.com](http://www.ChickenSoup.com)

Directly from Chicken's site: [Extra Christmas Stories Needed!](#)

“For a possible second Christmas book, we are looking for additional Christmas stories. We have already completed our Christmas Magic book, so if you submitted a story for that book, please do not resubmit as your story is already under consideration. New stories on all aspects of Christmas are welcomed. Please make sure that your stories are “Santa Safe” as we do not want to spoil the magic for anyone. **The deadline date for story submissions is July 13, 2010.**”

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### **MORE CHICKEN CALL-OUTS:**

**HURRY!** *New Moms:* **Deadline: July 31, 2010**

*Grandmothers:* **Deadline: August 31, 2010**

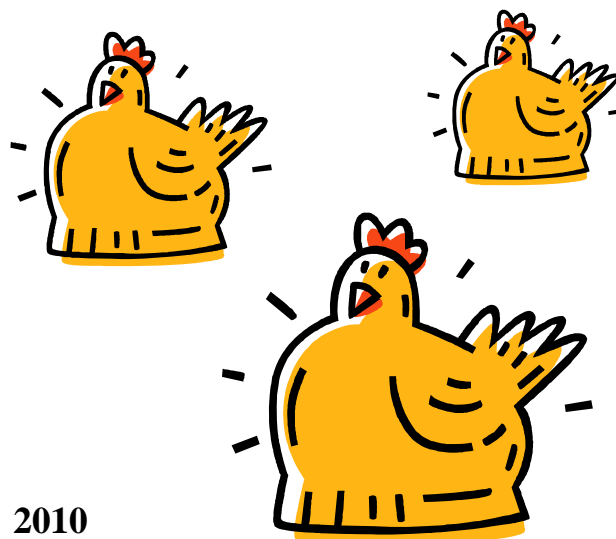
*Preteens:* **Deadline: August 31, 2010**

**DEADLINE MOVED UP!**

*Teens:* **Deadline: December 31, 2010**

*Young at Heart:* **Deadline: December 31, 2010**

*Mothers and Daughters:* **Deadline: December 31, 2010**



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**HURRY! TIME IS RUNNING OUT SUBMIT NOW!**



## *A Cup of Comfort* [www.CupofComfort.com](http://www.CupofComfort.com)

*A Cup of Comfort for  
Christian Women*

**Deadline: July 31, 2010**

**Story Length:** 750 to 1500 words

**Submission Deadline:** August 15, 2010

**Finalist Notification:** August 20, 2010

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***Go for it! Get published!***