

The Typewriter

By Mel Lavine

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My trials with the computer are no secret among people who know me.

I am a displaced person from the age of typewriters who came kicking and screaming into cyberspace.

I have missed typewriters ever since computers took over the world. I am not, for example, like one old friend who ditched his typewriter the day he bought his first computer. In fact, I've kept an antiquated Olympia, a weighty table model, not as a writing machine but as a reminder of a simpler age.

The insecurity of the electronic miracle drives me nuts. The other day my printer was on the fritz. But if it's not the printer, it's the ink cartridge, or the screen, or the modem, or a short, or the wires, or a finger strays and presto! I've lost a document, weeks of work down the rabbit hole.

Saving on the hard disk is not security enough. Think power outages. So think CDs, or SanDisk's Cruzer Micro. The friend who made a gift of the latter says it's a cinch to connect to the computer. And probably it is, but the Lady Friend and I are still figuring it out.

I'm telling you all this because after the printer failed I dropped in at an office equipment store that sells typewriters, old typewriters, to be sure.

“I just want to look at your typewriters. I don’t know if I’ll buy anything.”

“Take your time,” said a burly fellow who didn’t stir from a desk in a large room with all sorts of devices for business. “Take all the time you like.”

I liked the Smith Corona for \$180 but I really liked the Olivetti for \$250. But then I asked myself, why am I doing this? I’ll never use the typewriter. I’ll never give up the computer.

“I like the Olivetti,” I said. “But I need to sleep on it.” I hesitated, then wrote him a check on account for \$50.

That night the printer was running again, and to my relief functioned flawlessly. In the morning I went back to the store lugging my old Olympia. The burly fellow fiddled with it a moment, then we bargained. In the end I wound up paying a few dollars off the listed price and left happy with the Olivetti.

When I got home I showed the typewriter to the Lady Friend. "It's very nice," she said. "But you'll never use it."

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