

Typos and other misfortunes

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"My name is Lois and I'm a bad typist." Maybe there should be a support group for people like me, where we would confess and then sit around drinking coffee and commiserating. Bad typing DOES require sympathy and support, because invariably the bad typist types "pubic" when she means "public" and it comes back to haunt her. Me.

The thing is, I taught myself to type when I was a child, sneaking in and using my father's manual Royal typewriter when he wasn't around to catch me at it. (Oh, maybe he wouldn't have minded all that much; he was a good dad.) No one told me that there were rules and procedures for typing. I just did it....and did it and did it....and after a while I did it very fast; but I still can't do it without looking (when I wore the print off the keys of my laptop computer, Apple replaced the whole keyboard for me but until that new one arrived in the mail I was completely sunk...could not remember where a single letter was) and I have never done it without a lot of mistakes.

When I first began writing books, back in 1976, I was using a portable typewriter on a small table in an unobtrusive corner of my then husband's study. I used carbon paper. If I revised anything, it meant re-typing the whole blasted thing. I was thrilled when erasable typing paper was invented; it enhanced my life immeasurably.

I got a word processor in, oh, maybe 1990 or 1991. It was a large, noisy machine called a Decmate II and it cost me a fortune: \$6,000. I thought it was a computer, but what did I know; it was simply a word processor. THE GIVER was the first book that I wrote on a non-typewriter, and I remember the sheets rolling out of the printer - clatter clatter clatter - and I had to tear them apart one by one. But still! I could correct all my zillions of typos without re-typing or erasing or using White-out! It changed my life.

In 1994 my friend Carol Otis Hurst told me that what I had was not a computer at all, and I should get a computer, and she showed me hers, which she was carrying at the time. This conversation took place in the Toronto airport. Holy Moley! I thought. This person is carrying her work with her! She can sit in a hotel room and write. And revise. And then pick the whole

thing up and take it home, and it only weighs...what? She handed it to me, using just one hand.. Back home my enormous Decmate II was taking up the entire top of my desk and floor space besides and scaring the neighbors with its noise.

So I bought a computer. Macintosh, because that's what Carol Otis Hurst told me to get, and she was right.

I tried to sell the Decmate II, for which I had, after all, paid \$6000, but people hooted and laughed at me, and finally I had to pay someone to take it away.

Now I have three Macintosh computers, one in each of my two houses, and one that I simply schlep around and use in hotels and airports. I transfer stuff between/among them using a gizmo the size of a lipstick, and I haven't the slightest idea how that works. I envision a very tiny man crouched inside it, typing, but I know that is a dumb fantasy.

But the point of my telling you all of this is to explain that nonetheless, I still type badly (fast, though) and even with the ease of revision, some of the typos emerge...and they will, or already have, on this blog....and therefore are seen in public. Sorry: public.

Tags: Untagged