

## MY OTHER TYPEWRITER

What you are reading now was typed on a Model B IBM Executive typewriter. Not only does it use a carbon ribbon and have a degree of proportional spacing, it has "micro-elite" characters.

The proportional characters are a significant visual improvement over monospaced type even though every character must fall into one of three possible widths: 2, 3 or 4 units. That's not as subtle as, say, in a monotype casting machine. Just ask Rich Hopkins. But it's still good.

The "micro-elite" font is about the size of 8-point printers' type. If only the line spacing offered an option of more than 6 lines per inch it could produce output approximating typesetting.

This machine has a couple of features unusual even for the Model B Executive typewriters. The carriage is 18 inches wide, 4 inches wider than any similar models I've seen in online pictures. It also has an extra key to the left of the numeral 2 key. This key types a paragraph sign, ¶, in uppercase position, and a section sign, §, in lowercase position. I have not seen any online images of this, either. I wonder whether this kind of specialized machine might have been for legal or legislative offices.

The "micro-elite" face puts about 75 characters across a full-width line on this page, so it reads much better in two columns than as one wide column.

This machine does need some maintenance. According to its serial number it was manufactured in 1957. Over these 60 years the rubber carriage has hardened and shrunk a bit. The drive roller that propels keys to strike the platen is worn slightly, resulting in keys not always striking with the same force. (Notice how the lowercase "s" for example appears heavier or lighter in different places.) The backspace key doesn't always work. And the space bars don't always engage right away, especially when the machine is cold.

The lesson from this litany is that older electric typewriters can present maintenance issues that affect how the typing looks. These issues are complicated by the fact that the number of typewriter repairmen, while not exactly zero, has plummeted in recent decades.

But despite all this, the point of this "Easy Journal" is to show how even a lowly typewriter is a potential tool for creating an amateur journal. And I've seen used ones offered for sale in thrift stores, at estate sales, and online in eBay as well as a few dealers' websites.

Published by Bill Boys, 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206

(I bought this machine second-hand from an office supply store in Mansfield, Ohio, in the late 1970s. I have no knowledge of its history.)

Printed on Staples 28-lb. Premium Bright White, on a laser printer

Typewriters are another means of laying down a text for an amateur journal.

They do still exist. This page is being typed on the Olympia portable that I described in Pennant Bravo, No. 69, of November, 2017. It is, some may say, an old machine. It has been with me since 1965 or 1966. It went with us to Nigeria in 1966 and came back with Ruth in June of 1967 as she evacuated from Biafra, the name taken by the secessionist Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Even so, it is hardly an antique, and its operation is as good as when I bought it in Culver City, California. It types, and with a new ribbon it produces a nicely uniform image on the page.

That image may be improved slightly by the fact that I have a second sheet behind it as a cushion to let the keys strike against a slightly softer surface, thus making a slightly deeper impression on the ribbon. (Old hands at letterpress printing will recognize the analogy to makeready.)

But typewriters, especially manual ones like this, have very little that can go wrong with them except the hardening of the roller.

So if you have an old typewriter around, do not have a computer, and your handwriting isn't legible, you still have a way to prepare your own amateur journal.

The "flag" or "masthead" will only be a rendition of the same characters as the body of the text, but it can be made to stand out a bit by surrounding it with

space. In typing class years ago our teacher taught us ways to piece together keystrokes to make large-size letters for just such occasions, but that goes beyond easy for our purposes here.

You could also just hand-letter the flag but we'll stick with using just a typewriter for this demonstration.

Setting the margins and indents is just a matter of moving the margin stops and the tab stops. One little wrinkle I discovered in this portable is that the left margin stop can't be moved farther right than the center of the carriage and the right margin stop also cannot. That presented a problem when attempting to type on the full spread of the sheet, so I folded the sheet in half and positioned it in the middle of the carriage in order to be able to use both of them effectively.

This typewriter uses "pica" type, meaning there are 10 characters per inch. I'm using single spacing, 6 lines per inch. That would translate into about nine words per line. There are about 42 lines per page, so this journal would accommodate a piece of writing of about 1,200 words of prose. Less of poetry, or if blank lines were inserted after paragraphs.

If this were an "elite" typewriter (12 characters per inch) it would accommodate about 1,400 words.

Ragged right justification, which this is, is much easier to type, but full justification is possible by typing the text first on scrap paper but with the same margins as on the final draft, counting how many spaces to add to make the right margin come out even, and then retyping it on the finished draft by carefully adding the right number of spaces to each line. The following paragraph shows it.

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In my opinion, it's a lot of work for a dubious benefit. The gaps can become small lakes horizontally, and can create "rivers" as well -- vertical meanders of white space. To that is added the extra work of retyping each line and being careful to be exact about the number of spaces to add. You can judge for yourself.

(Here's the same paragraph, ragged right.)

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You may already have noticed that I use only one space after the end of a sentence, not two, as I was taught in typing class. That's the influence of typesetting and typography, which normally does not add extra spacing at the end of a sentence.

If you happen to have a typewriter that uses a carbon ribbon, you will probably find that such a ribbon lays down a much denser black image which will in turn reproduce more sharply and crisply in the printing of your copies for the bundle. If you have a typewriter that does proportional spacing, your image will more closely resemble typography even though the variable width of characters will be less than what true typesetting would yield.