



COOL TYPE



living room, where my mother often admires it when she visits. Admiration is the best typewriters can expect these days, now that they're largely objects of nostalgia, like dial phones and transistor radios.

Although mechanical writing machines have existed for centuries, Remington marketed the first commercially successful typewriter in 1873, in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, making this year its 130th anniversary. By the late 1880s, it had revolutionized the office, coinciding with new ideas of specialization that expanded job hierarchies and opened the doors of industry to women.

While earlier models were clunky, engineers soon fine-tuned the piano-like lever system so the keys could be played at business tempo: *allegro*. As demand increased into the 20th century, manufacturers, Remington notable among them, began addressing the home market. Aside from potential gifts for young people, portable typewriters such as the Remington No. 2 were marketed mainly to women to type up recipe cards, letters, and perhaps some of their husband's bookkeeping. In keeping with the era's gender stereotypes, Remington's two-tone colour scheme also included blue and turquoise, and green and lemon yellow.

The Remington portable first appeared on the market in 1920. Compact and light by the standards of the day, it still had all the engineering features of the company's office machines. What was different was the attention to aesthetics. When you remove the lovely curved chassis from its case, the type bars lie flat. Black type-bar guards curve parenthetically around either side of them in a protective embrace. Sliding the "Type Bar Raising Lever"

ST. CATHARINES, Ontario, Christmas morning, 1928. A 13-year-old girl walks into her living room and sees an unwrapped black case with a bow on top. Opening the case, she whoops with delight. There sits a Remington No. 2 portable typewriter, its metal frame painted in lustrous purple and lavender enamel. To a young girl who loves watching her father type on his bulky black Underwood, listening to the *clackety-clack* of the keys and the ring signalling the carriage return, it is the most beautiful thing she's ever seen. Perhaps

her father noticed the company's ad, appearing in popular publications around the holiday season, which read: "Here is just the right present for son or daughter...."

Four decades pass and the girl, now a mother of three and living in Toronto, watches as her youngest, a son, hunts and pecks on the old Remington, composing juvenilia. A few years later, as a teenager, he sells some stories painstakingly typed on the Remington.

Today, that same typewriter is on display beneath the glass top of the coffee table in my

along its crescent-shaped groove lifts the keys to a 45-degree angle, ready for typing. You can see all the working parts, watch them do their magic. Contrast that with computers, whose innards are inaccessible to all but the hardened geeks among us. It's hard to imagine anyone placing a PC clone or a workaday laptop in a display case like an *objet d'art*, as I have with my Remington, transforming it from a tool of work and recreation to an artifact – at least until the apocalyptic day I'm on deadline and the hydro grid crashes. —David Hayes

Photography by Christopher Gonzaga