I put a sheet of paper in the typewriter and began typing, one letter at a time. “Coming Soon – C&W Newspaper.” I wanted to spell our names but it took too long, so I used our initials. Chloe and I were in the corner of our bedroom which now served as our office. Dad found us a desk to hold the digital camera, typewriter and rotary phone Mr. Dawson had given us. Dad even plugged the phone into a jack so it would work, although it connected to our home phone number. The lava lamp made our desk look official.

“How about the word gazette instead?” Dad suggested.

“Ga-what?” I asked.

“Gazette,” he repeated. “It’s another word for newspaper.”

“Do we have any white stuff to cover mistakes?” I asked, remembering the typewriter didn’t have a delete button. Mom answered no.

I replaced the paper and started typing again. “Coming Soon – C&W Gazette! Serving the South Forest Neighborhood.”

“Looks great,” Mom praised, “but the word neighborhood is spelled incorrectly.”

“Why didn’t spellcheck tell me?” Frustrated, I started again. Meanwhile, Chloe went to our bookshelf and grabbed the N encyclopedia. She thumbed through several pages and began reading.

“The first newspaper in the Americas was in 1689. That newspaper was a big part of the 13 colonies gaining independence from British rule. When the Constitution guaranteed freedom of press, newspapers became an even bigger force.

They really grew in popularity in the 1830s with the development of the Penny Press. Advances in the printing made it easier and cheaper to print newspapers. The Penny Press sold newspapers for one cent, making it accessible to the average citizen.”

“What about the first newspaper Kentucky?” I asked. Chloe grabbed the K encyclopedia, found the information and continued.

“In Kentucky, the first newspaper was published in 1787 in Lexington. It was called the Kentucke Gazette – and Kentucky was spelled with an e instead of a y. By the mid-1800s, newspapers were commonplace in the state.” Chloe paused for a second. “It says that most towns use to have two newspapers.”

“I guess they had more news,” I suggested.

Dad tousled my head. “Most towns had two newspapers based on political party. The Republicans sponsored a newspaper that promoted their beliefs and candidates, while the Democrats had a newspaper that promoted their views and contenders. For instance, Lexington Herald-Leader came about from the merger of two papers – the Lexington Herald and the Lexington Leader. The Herald held a more liberal stance while the Leader was more conservative. In 1983, the two newspapers merged to form Lexington Herald-Leader.”

“Should the C&W Gazette be conservative or liberal?” I asked.

“I would stick to writing stories your buddies in the neighborhood will enjoy,” Dad suggested. “Things like who’s having a birthday and the date of the next yard sale.”

“Where do I get this information?” I asked. Chloe began scanning the page.

“News is obtained through various avenues,” Chloe read. “Many large newspapers receive their news by subscribing to a wire service such as the Associated Press or Reuters. Journalists and editors at these news agencies gather information, but instead of publishing their own newspaper, they supply it to subscribing newspapers for them to print. However, most news is gained from reporters,” Chloe continued. “They’re the eyes and ears of the paper. Reporters are assigned to a certain area called a beat. They cover town hall and school board meetings, check police records, and talk with people who live in their beat.”

“So our beat is South Forest?” I asked.

“Yes, Mom answered, “and your beat is having a Homeowner’s Association meeting this evening at 5:00 followed by a cookout.”

At 4:45, Chloe and I walked toward the Community Center. Chloe carried the camera while I held my notebook and pen. We both had our “Official Press” badge clipped to our collars.

“I wonder what’s happening at the Town Hall Center,” Chloe said, noticing security everywhere.

“I’m not sure, but it looks important,” I replied. I’d barely finished my sentence when a lady wearing a black dress approached us.

“You’re here! We couldn’t start until the two members from print media had arrived. Follow me.” I raised my eyebrows at Chloe.

“I didn’t know Homeowner’s Association meetings were so formal,” I whispered as Chloe and I followed.

“Congratulations on being chosen to attend tonight’s event,” the lady said as we sat down. “We only extend a limited number of invitations – choosing four members from broadcasting media and two members from print media. You two must be skilled journalists.”

“Oh no,” I whispered. “She must have seen our badges and assumed we...” Before I finished, a man stepped to the microphone.

“Ladies and Gentleman, please welcome the governor of Kentucky.”

I’d been in lots of pickles, but this one took the cake.

---

SPONSORED BY
LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER
KPA KENTUCKY PRESS ASSOCIATION
NIE NEWS IN EDUCATION