

My Collection of Undo Gizmos

By Dennis Knight

I fear, in this computer age of automated spelling and grammar checkers, that the world will completely forget the gizmos and chemicals we once deployed to nullify our mistakes, and it has become my goal to preserve these relics for the centuries ahead. To that end, I have collected a box of my finest undo gizmos, which I shall happily donate to the first museum that will take it.

My lifetime devotion to, or should I say need for, the skill of undoing began with my inability to color inside the lines. My solution to that was to select a darker crayon, and obliterate the entire page in a series of swirls and slashes. It didn't correct the mistake, but I had covered it up, which is just as good when you are two. So the first item you will find in my donated collection of undo gizmos is a black Crayola, well used.

Along about the age of five, I had a Big Chief tablet, a writing pad in roughly the texture and density of toilet paper. The pencil Mom gave me was a clue she knew I was error prone, because on it she had slipped an extra large eraser. It would help me undo a goof if I rubbed gently and patiently, but if I licked it first, I would get a power boost, instantly wipe out any trace of the mistake, and dig a hole in the paper reaching sometimes six pages deep. So in my box are a slightly chewed number two pencil and a rubber eraser tip. For provenance I have included my tablet, but please accept any holes as art, and any nonstandard spelling or punctuation as poetic license.

Moving forward a couple of years, Sister Mary Thomas proclaimed the students in her domain would master the Palmer method of penmanship, and prescribed the fountain pen as the instrument of that difficult craft. Mom confidently equipped me with the specified utensil and a jar of ink, and because her optimism was guarded, she gave me a recycled eye drop bottle with a concoction she called ink eradicator, which was actually bleach, slightly diluted. And so my fountain pen, the pot of ink, and the eradicator have their places in my donation.

I know before the museum calls there will come to mind other undo gizmos that should be included, things like caulking compound, a paint brush and the claw end of a hammer. I'll put those in as I think of them, but there are a couple of others I must tell you about.

When I joined the Army, my commanders optimistically declared me a typist, but in that reserved spirit I have come to recognize, issued me an electric eraser. I used it often and developed a keen touch, never licking once, gently lifting every typo from the original leaving nary a scar, and peeling back layers of carbon paper to fix the copies. My electric eraser is in the box, too.

And the last item for the collection, if I want to give it up, is currently my favorite among all undo gizmos. It's my Model 58-99Ci Shredder, so powerful it can eradicate threatening letters and entire stories gone awry.