

The Proofreader

I was hoping to have a book of about 200 pages published in a remote Canadian Community. There was some proofing to be done to correct errors. Anyone who has written something for publication will attest to not being able to proofread their own writing. For example: Is the word proofreader spelled correctly? Should it be proof reader or Proofreader?

On my only contact with the company, the owner assured me that they have a veteran corrector of common mistakes. The manuscript had undergone quite a bit of scrutiny already. Later, I contacted the Proofreader by phone. A skilled look never hurts especially when the viewer is experienced. He had been notified that a proofing task was at hand so he must have done a bit of inquiry.

I told him that I was in no hurry. So, after a couple of weeks, I called him again to inquire about his progress. I had not met him in person. He told me that he had just taken a brief look at the book. I assured him that a reasonable time would be fine. We both were happy with a couple of more weeks before I checked with him again. He is a nice person.

He was comfortable chatting with me about the book. He had gotten the feel of the task.

He gently launched a question that was really a comment. He said: “You are in good shape for your age, aren’t you? I thanked him and said: “I try to get exercise by running. He further added that he had a hard time believing that I was 97 years old. He had spoken with the owner and done some brief browsing, I guessed. They must have been teasing him, I thought.

This surprised me. I am in fact 87, not 97. Evidently, he was misinformed by the staff that I met on a trip to the publishing house some time ago. At that time, he was not present. I do not look younger than 87. I know that for sure. I recoil when addressed as ‘sonny’ or ‘young man’. I am neither.

I mentioned to him that the book he is reading contains at least 20 to 30 pictures in which I appear. I was becoming rather suspicious of his familiarity with my book however brief was his visit inside its pages. Had he looked at it at all? I was beginning to wonder.

I told the Proofreader that I had a rather clear picture of myself on the Internet playing the Bernoulli Involute. He had mentioned a picture of me playing the guitar. He had looked for me on the Internet. We were not looking at the same image. This is not uncommon on the Web.

I directed him to <https://wmichaelsterling.com/> He seemed to have some trouble with the link. Becoming a bit puzzled myself, I resorted to asking him to tell me the letters one by one to be sure we were looking at the text and image. Internet addresses can be allusive. You must establish them at the start.

His role as a Proofreader had, it seems, been derailed. Something needed correction. The Proofreader had typed in www.michaelsterling.com

I saw the mistake immediately. He had left out the first ‘w’ before michael and that caused the World Wide Web to bring up a young and handsome black man who is well known in Europe and beyond, but not by me nor the Proofreader. The pictured young man was indeed playing a guitar on a professionally done Internet Web Site.

The whole episode will become part of my memories of life and amusement. I think the Proofreader and I have much in common. We will meet again. He is an excellent Proofreader. He was a type setter for many years.

If you have time, take a look at the two images – one of a very old man and the other of a young performer/composer.