Priorities

written by Holly
August 5, 2003
By Holly Lisle

Life changes are tough. They sneak up on us when we aren't looking and change the very ground beneath our feet and we suddenly discover ourselves constantly falling over and not knowing why until we stop and look around.

I have discovered myself standing on alien terrain, not quite Dorothy in Oz and not quite John Carter on Mars, but far enough from where I thought I was that I've had to stop and reassess. I might have been here for quite some time without even realizing it, because when I am focused on something, I have been known to lose sight of both the forest and the trees.

I've been focused on writing, and more specifically, on writing in the setting of community, and suddenly I look up, and I'm somewhere else, and I'm someONE else.

I'm starting homeschooling my five-soon-to-be-six-year-old son in earnest in a month. I haven't sat on my couch on a rainy day and read a book in five years. I haven't pulled my guitar out of its case in about the same length of time. I haven't had the oil paints and canvases out. I haven't planted a single flower or turned a spadeful of dirt. And I'm tired.

I have been doing something tremendously valuable during those years, something that has been a cross between a passion and a mission to me. I have been paying forward for the good that writing has brought to my life. I have been sharing something that I love beyond words with a whole lot of wonderful people who share the same love. I have been building a place where people who love writing can get together and support each other; this matters, and I am proud of what I managed to

accomplish.

But I have also been dropping twenty hours of my time a week into this project on a good week, every week, and on bad weeks when something goes wrong, thirty or more. One week it was almost seventy. That was a REALLY bad week, thanks muchly, FeaturePrice. I've been doing this seven days a week most weeks since some time in 1997, and the workload is getting heavier, not lighter.

I have had to deal with a lot of crap along with the wonderful things, and that wears. It wears even more when I take stock and realize that, because it is simply the nature of a project of this sort to generate crap along with wonderfulness, as long as I do this, there will be crap. Little nitwits with bad attitudes, liars, manipulators. They probably make up between .5% and 1% of any community, but they have really big mouths. When those mouths get going, they drown out everything else.

This last Jackass Parade was the event that made me stop and take stock of where I am. But we would have ended up here sooner or later even without it.

My priorities have become homeschooling, family, deadlines, friends. There is no room in there for a minimum twenty hours a week of site maintenance, membership debugging, password fixing, link checking, interface redesigning, post answering, rule-and-bylaw development, cool community idea creating, argument mediating, software testing, feature adding, and crap shovelling. There certainly isn't time in there for thirty or forty or seventy hours per week of such things.

Zette is taking over administration of the community and all of its peripherals, effective immediately. We'll be moving ALL of the cool site stuff – chat rooms, forums, research index, Broegga, member bio pages, community calendar, member weblog links, anything I put together specifically for the community – to a new Jatol-hosted site, **fmwriters.com**, which will

already be paid for with the 35 GB per month for a full year. Registration of the new name used most of the rest of what was in the fund – I paid for some of it out of my pocket so it didn't use it all.

My personal site – my weblog, my writing articles, and my chapters – will stay at hollylisle.com, which I'll pay for myself.

While the split allows me to actually pay my own way without getting benefits from donations for my private site that were intended for a community in which I am no longer a fully active participant, it is not an entirely altruistic move. For now, the community will still be mine, but Zette will run it for me. As long as people in the community treat Zette well, I'll drop in as I can and say hello and visit chat when I can, and things will continue to run as they ran before – my rules, same basic management, but with everything going through Zette, not me.

If there are problems severe enough to make Zette throw up her hands, however, things will change a lot, and very fast. Because if Zette quits, I either have the choice to shoulder the workload again, or drop the whole thing. I'll tell you in advance what my decision will be. I'll drop the whole thing. My name will come off the community that same day – there is no one else I'd trust with my name without my constant presence except for Sheila, and when I asked both of them if they'd take FM off my hands, Sheila declined. Without Zette, the doors have to close until someone else who is qualified to run it can be found. But there's more than that. Without me associated with the community, all of the software that runs it becomes invalid. I've checked, and the licenses are non-transferrable. Unless I am associated with the community, it cannot get upgrades, patches, or bug fixes for most of the software that runs it. I own the licenses to the chat room, the forums, the index, the community calendar, and the member bios, and I cannot sell them or give them to someone else, and

without a BIG infusion of new money to buy all-new licenses for these things, they will have to be shut down. With Zette there, it’s still my community. Without Zette, it won’t be.

With the community on a new server, it will be very easy for Zette to shut features down without affecting all the links and such on my personal site. Like I said, the move is not entirely altruistic. I think throughout the last five years or so, I’ve demonstrated my good intent toward the community, though, so I’d like a pass on this one.

I want to thank those of you who have been the good in all of this – every single one of you who came here to write. Thank you for ‘getting’ the purpose of the community, for ‘getting’ paying forward and showing that writing is a craft and a profession to be shared and loved. Thank you for writing, for not being a bunch of talkers and posers, but for using what the site offered to actually produce. You are an amazing bunch of people, and I’m glad you’re here, and I want to continue to be here with you, albeit in a vastly reduced presence. This place was for you all along, and so long as the .5% or 1% don’t screw things up, it will still be here for you.

Write. Hang on to your dreams, make them live and breathe and walk, pull each other up the mountain. What you’re doing matters. Never lose sight of that.

By the way, the domain fmwriters.com is ours for the next ten years, paid. I have faith that the community can be around that long, and still be wonderful enough to warrant a name domain name renewal for ten more years when the time comes.

Contents © Holly Lisle. https://hollylisle.com All Rights Reserved