

The Megaphone

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We Are The Vital Element

by **Craig Toensing**

I'm told that The Megaphone has readers that didn't go to high school in Elwood, Indiana, so I write this in part for them. A few years ago, one Marvin Crim had a dream. At times some have said a nightmare. He may have had collaborators but I'm not privy to that information. Marv graduated from Wendell L. Willkie High School back when the world was young. It was even younger when I did the same. The school is now mundanely called Elwood Community High School. I see some democrat hands in there somewhere.

Marv's dream was to use his computer/inter-net facileness to set up a website where individuals with an interest in Elwood could communicate with each other and share all sorts of things. Thus was born the PANTHER DEN. Messages are transmitted daily either individually or in digest or batched format. There are picture albums, event calendars and a database of members among other goodies. In its lifetime, the site has gone through a few metamorphoses. Thankfully jokes no longer appear for instance.

The DEN needed to have a host organization for a web based club, and that is currently an UK outfit named Wanadoo. We currently have about 350 people who have been accepted as members. There are nine or ten on average new messages posted every day.

Marv has incorporated two features on the site that existed when we were in school. One is "The Megaphone," which was the student's literary publication. That hits the Den site monthly. The other is a bit of whimsy that appeared in the school paper as a gossip column entitled "The Hall Clock" and it appears on the site weekly. There are often entries in "The Hall Clock" that only its author understands. There have also been entries that have offended folks that take themselves way too seriously.

For me, going to the site had become a ritual, like checking in on an old friend or reading the news, albeit of a familiar tone. My routine was broken a couple weeks ago when the messages stopped coming. For two or three days I missed my Elwood fix. After that it was just gone

and the other things in my life occupied my consciousness. This might be because I had e-mailed Marv and he told me Wanadoo had a problem and they were working on it.

It could have been something else, however, and that is the amorphous nature of the site. It exists only because of the energy we give it by posting and by reading and the husbandry of Marv and his Monitors. Sounds like a 60's vocal group.

The Den site is fragile. We members belong to a rather exclusive club and it is incumbent as a result of that membership that we keep the site going. Even if one is only a reader, that is a part of the keeping it going.

I would be among the first to admit that there are some things posted that I don't care one whit about. That calls to mind one of my Dad's aphorisms about the old Indian chief who said "I'm glad all men don't think alike because if they did, everyone would want my squaw." There is room on the site for most all of our musings. The recent down time emphasizes the key roll each of us plays in the life of the site, and the important roll it plays in our lives. We are the vital element -- be it ever thus.

Keep readin' and keep writin'. I paraphrase a classmate now living in Arizona by saying, "When it's gone, it isn't there anymore."

Craig Toensing '55