

On Being Webmaster

Webmaster was not born with that title, of course. He 'grew into it'. By living life, doing things, learning, and thinking. He was son, brother, husband, father, doctor, professor, citizen and so forth before he became Webmaster. In fact, he became Webmaster gradually and is still growing into it: still learning, still creating new websites. And, in a sense, still creating himself - and his legacy. Which raises a few questions.

Why create so many websites? Well, the answer has already been stated elsewhere on this site: because combining many websites into one (or a few) would make the website too dense and reduce the chance that anyone visiting the site would actually read much of what it contains. But that answer is not quite complete. One fact is that Webmaster, when he began work on many of these sites, did not actually see how interrelated they were - or would become. "The hardest thing to see is what is in front of your eyes" (4). Webmaster has used that quote many times, in attempting to educate adult learners. He has been only partially successful. Many medical students never 'got it'. The Hearing Examiner in the Costco case (see the Stop Costco Gas website) did not apparently get it. Even Webmaster still finds instances when he himself did not get it - or rather when it took him a very long time to get it.

In fact - as is explained in My Take 4 on the Webmaster Says website - it has taken Webmaster quite some time to understand how important it is to plan. Whether the problem one is trying to solve is a small one or a very large one, it is better to spend a LOT of time planning before doing anything ["a stitch in time saves nine" (5)]. And sometimes no amount of planning will make things just right. Good enough will have to do. For example, this piece. In a sense it is 'paired' with an essay entitled "On Websites". One - or both - ought to be first (just below the middle line on this list) - but which should be first? Webmaster worked on this essay first, but has come to believe that the "On Websites" essay should come first, if only because the notion of websites preceded Webmaster's notion of I AM WEBMASTER.

Which brings Webmaster to the other main question that - he hopes - is in the mind of the visitor: Why is the title I AM WEBMASTER? Why not "I Am A Webmaster" or "I Am The Webmaster"? Well, because both would be true and both would be false. In each case the pronoun is correct, but in each case it is not completely so. And more to the point, Webmaster has come to **think** of himself as Webmaster, despite the fact that he has NOT mastered making websites (not by a long shot!). Webmaster has come to regard his role, in being Webmaster, as being that of an avatar (an icon or figure representing a particular person in computer games, Internet forums, etc.). He actually sees himself as Webmaster. This may seem strange to anyone reading this essay, but consider the notion that - in our lives - we all wear many hats and hold many titles depending on what

we are doing. And since Webmaster is now spending much of his time creating/maintaining websites, it follows - to him - that he is Webmaster.

Finally (for this essay), a bit about how Webmaster came to see himself as Webmaster. It did not happen overnight. It started to happen when he agreed to be webmaster for the Stop Costco Gas Coalition. In some ways the nearly two years he spent on that struggle were catalyst for changes in his life. [Others have said the same thing.] He had retired from his academic position a few years earlier and almost entirely ceased his civic activism. He had spent time 'testing the waters', trying the various things he had planned to do in retirement. He was quite content - and active. So, once he began work on the SCGC, website he somewhat resented the time it required. But then he realized it fit nicely with the strategy he had adopted of doing things to 'stretch' his mind - so he would not rust mentally. It was 'of a piece' with the scientific project he had begun: to explore 'wide field deconvolution' (see the Adult Learner website for a brief description and the PhysarumPlus website for a more 'scientific' discussion). And he found himself rather enjoying the work (although it was much more demanding than anyone else in the Coalition understood). In fact, it lead him into more activities related to the SCGC goals and he learned a great deal about various apparently unrelated topics. But he found himself seeing the connections between those topics and began to think of new topics for websites. In one sense, what happened over those two years was a logical extension of almost all the things he had been doing all his life. But in another sense, they were a hyperbolic increase in those activities. In slope it was rather like the exponential curve he had shown the Hearing Examiner (when he testified) - but which the HE had not grasped, even though such curves are taught to high school and college students - and not just students of physics.

Because the new level of activity - or rather **intensity** of activity - was such a mental strain, he began to do a lot of physical things (to keep his life in balance) and that was when he began to think about Marshall's Way (see the Background section of Webmaster Says). And things just kept increasing in intensity. He was becoming Webmaster.