

by Shelley Wood

# I quit Facebook! I like

## Escape from cyber “friend”-ship

■ Quitting Facebook is probably the hardest thing I’ve done this month. Not that I’m finding life lonely without it, or miss being privy to the daily musings of far flung friends, family and people I ignored in elementary school. The hard part was convincing Facebook itself I wanted to go. I’ve never felt so cherished and popular on Facebook as I did when I quit the party.

First Facebook sulked, refusing to hand me my coat until I explained why I was leaving. Not providing a reason is not an option. When, after a minute of soul-searching, I ticked: “I don’t find Facebook useful”—a tight précis if ever there was one—Facebook pop-ups beseeched me to try other ways of improving my experience. Don’t go! Try this! Or this!

Committed, I press on with deactivation, only to be asked to remember my long forgotten password, then decipher those eerie words, scrawled by cyberghosts, to make sure I was a real live human, trying against all reason to quit the company of unseen online acquaintances.

Facebook, sensing the unbearable lonesomeness that would ensue, sent me emails exhorting me to come back—I could “reactivate” at any time. Curious, I tried logging on again and lo! There I was! All my photos and friends waiting for me, like I’d snuck away to have a good cry in the toilets only to slink back, my seat still warm, and no one aware I’d been gone.

I’m no Luddite. I make a living online; I tweet, I blog, I’m LinkedIn. But Facebook for a long time repelled me—too vacuous, too vain. Ultimately I was spurred to join when I figured out that my friends, my true friends, weren’t calling or emailing any more. No pictures of their kids at Halloween, birthdays slipping past unremarked. But, I realized, they were keeping in touch on Facebook and that prodded me online.

Soon though, I resented how much time I spent prowling around the lives of people I scarcely cared for and wondering if my life was being similarly snooped. If isola-

tion and nostalgia drove me onto Facebook, it also chased me off.

I tried to join in on the idle status updates, post occasional photos, but either I failed to get the gist of it or I friended the wrong people. I balked at posting anything truly banal, and my “friends” seemingly weren’t the kind of rabid responders ha-ha-ing or OMG-ing my every phrase. To post some truly heartfelt announcement—an accomplishment, the death of a family pet—and have no-one like/not like was worse than keeping silent. A distant relative was often the only person who “liked” what I was up to: when I started leading my life in ways that could earn her approval, I knew it was time to go.

These days I’m trying to surprise old friends with calls to their landlines—those few who still have them. I mail letters and postcards from my travels: an upsidedown iPad makes for an excellent lapdesk.

Naturally, I spent far too long agonizing over my final status update—even in my leave-taking, Facebook could sap every spare moment from my busy day.

Shelley Wood...is quitting Facebook in search of more authentic and tangible connections. To friend me in real life, I’m findable.

Or you can follow me on Twitter. **OL**