

# The Busy, Balanced Life of Liz Best



*With Val Wilson*

Liz Best is an outgoing and highly capable individual—a rare combination of the work ethic in overdrive, and a life balanced with play.

Through the flex-day schedule at Royal Roads University, Liz is free every other Friday, which she generally reserves for golf. What other activities does she manage to accomplish in her seven day week? More golfing, hiking, participating in team sports, visiting with family and friends, taking care of home and garden, watching some TV—especially *Enterprise*, the new *Star Trek* series—reading, and shopping.

She is a member of the St. Michaels University School Alumni Association Board, and like Leta, her mom, Liz is involved in Zonta International.

Her varied interests, inquiring mind, and sense of humour are sure to keep Liz sharp and vital for decades to come!

**The Scrivener:** *Liz, where were you born and raised?*

**Liz:** Victoria is my birthplace. My paternal great-great grandparents settled in the Cowichan Valley in the late 1800s. Other than when attending the University of Western Ontario, I haven't lived anywhere but Victoria.

**The Scrivener:** *As a youngster, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

**Liz:** I remember an essay I wrote as a child where I wanted to be the Premier of BC and then Prime Minister of Canada. Failing that, I wanted to be an RCMP officer. By high school, I had no idea what I wanted to be, although I had developed a clear sense of what I probably *wouldn't* be doing; my artistic skills have never developed beyond crayon stickmen. I managed to graduate from university without a clear idea of what I wanted to “be.”

**The Scrivener:** *What events and people helped shape you into the person you are today? Did you have a mentor?*

**Liz:** A few people stand out in my mind. My grade three teacher, Mrs. Hooper, was the first person to channel my excess energy into productive activities. Not until

high school at St. Michaels University School did I again encounter individuals who understood what I needed to stay focused on education. Mr. Gardiner, biology teacher and deputy headmaster; Mr. Laidlaw, physics and mathematics; and Mr. Jones, chemistry and home room, allowed me to explore learning on my terms, yet remain within the constraints of the secondary education system.

Mr. Gardiner was the one I most often went to for advice, both sage and humorous. To this day, he is the first person I look for when I am back on campus.

**The Scrivener:** *What career positions did you hold before you joined the staff of Royal Roads?*

**Liz:** I started my career as a registry agent for Kitto Registry Services while in high school. Then I joined a firm as an accounting clerk and worked my way up to Accounts Manager. This firm sold computer hardware and software. There I developed my interest in computers, and spent my “idle” time at work building, repairing, and selling desktop computers.

Next, I spent a few years at an accounting firm, working toward my CA, but again ended up working with

computers. I installed a local area network (LAN) and computerized the functions the firm performed manually. Since then, my title has been along the lines of Systems Analyst for various government ministries, and is my current classification at Royal Roads.

**The Scrivener:** *You have called yourself an "Intranet & Extranet Actualizer" Please tell us about that.*

**Liz:** The designation of Systems Analyst encompasses a wide range of technical staff here at Royal Roads. To distinguish our functions, we were encouraged to select titles to identify our individual roles. Some selected commonly used titles that reflected their work (for example, programmers selected programmer analyst), and others added additional descriptors to the phrase Systems Analyst.

In my previous role for the University, my title was Systems Analyst, Learning Resources, since one of my primary responsibilities was making the learning resources accessible to our learners. In September 2001, I changed functional teams and concentrated my activities on two areas. Since one area is relatively *new* and still requires substantial development, and the other is *brand new*—and both are inseparable from our intranet and extranet—I came up with the title Intranet & Extranet Actualizer; my role is to make the two areas happen.

**The Scrivener:** *What do you find most satisfying about your work at Royal Roads?*

**Liz:** "The challenge" and "the opportunity." I have only been working in this industry for 15 years, yet the technology changes at a pace that challenges me to adapt and refocus. I started helping others with computer issues on DOS-based 8086s, with monochrome monitors, 256KB of RAM, and 10MB hard drives. Now Pentium 4 computers operate at 1.7GHz, with 16 million colours on the monitor, 256MB of RAM, and 20GB hard drives. The software has become correspondingly complex; I enjoy the challenge of demystifying the complex, and to have

the opportunity to continually learn about the latest developments.

And, in each of my workplaces, I found myself cast into the role of asking myself, "What do you want to be able to do?" and matching that with "What technology, electronic or otherwise, is available to meet your needs?" Here at Royal Roads, I have a balance between collaborating with co-workers and working independently to answer these questions to provide solutions. My satisfaction comes from being a part of successfully integrating the *technology* with the *need*.

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**The Scrivener:** *What are your typical day/week work activities?*

**Liz:** Here are my basic responsibilities.  
**Weekly**

- Meet with CrossRoads focus group (our Intranet)
- Discuss needed developments and potential solutions. Meet with CrossRoads development team
- Discuss development of potential solutions and project status. Meet with Learning Resource Centre team
- Discuss needed developments and potential solutions for the library and its electronic resources

**Sample daily activities**

- Check/respond to email/voice mail (repeat throughout day)
- Update proxy server configuration used to access online resources (<http://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/>)
- Update library server configuration used to access library catalogue (<http://library.royalroads.ca/>)
- Batch load and update patron records into library system
- Write and edit real-time reports for

library system

- Research and create gadgets—the individual pieces of portal pages—for CrossRoads
- Assist technical support staff with issues relating to library system or CrossRoads

**The Scrivener:** *Sounds like your days are exceptionally full of leading-edge computer activities! How do you add balance to your busy life?*

**Liz:** I fall into the category of a typical West-Coaster; I prefer to be outdoors as much as possible. I definitely, however, avoid cold temperatures, which is easy to do here in Victoria. Last year I started golfing, and have played through the winter—on nice days. I play slo-pitch and outdoor volleyball, I 10-pin bowl, and go on easy day-hikes in the many parks surrounding Victoria. And, if the weather isn't suited for being outdoors, I'm more than happy to curl up with a good book by the fire.

Mother Nature and I have a peaceful coexistence with respect to the garden at my house; some of the things that I plant *thrive*, while others are replaced (by MN) with more suitable plants such as chickweed and dandelions.

**The Scrivener:** *Liz, What do you value most in life?*

**Liz:** Having it to live. I offer this quote to express what I mean.

"We find greatest joy, not in getting, but expressing what we are...Men do not really live for honors or for pay; their gladness is not in the taking and holding, but in the doing, the striving, the building, the living. It is a higher joy to teach than to be taught. It is good to get justice, but better to do it; fun to have things, but more to make them. The happy man is he who lives the life of love, not for the honors it may bring, but for the life itself."

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