

Times 'watchdog' is being punished for doing her job

A *New York Times* reporter is spending the month in jail while her son waits for her to get home. No one knows how long Judith Miller might be in the slammer. It might be until a federal grand jury ends its term in October. By that time, her son will be in school.

Ms. Miller went to jail rather than give federal prosecutors the name of her source in a story about a CIA spy. It's illegal in this country to divulge the name of a secret agent, and after much to do during President Bush's first term, a special prosecutor was named to find out who spilled the beans. The name of Valerie Plame, wife of a former U.S. ambassador, was first published by columnist Robert Novak, who strangely enough, has not been called before the grand jury. Ms. Miller herself wrote no stories.

A Time magazine reporter, Matthew Cooper, did an about-face at the jailhouse door, and said he'd testify. He and his employer said their source had authorized them to.

Ms. Miller says she's not willing to break a promise, so she's in jail.

This should not be. If courts can order a reporter to divulge a confidential source, then important government misconduct will go unreported. Sources won't be willing to talk if they know the reporter might be rolled by a federal judge.

And federal judges, as we see in this case, can be mighty persuasive.

It's not that this case is all that important. It's mostly political; Democrats hope to find a top administration source to crucify over the Plame revelations. Both President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have been interviewed. Top White House aides, especially strategist Karl Rove, are on the short list of suspects.

Whether the naming is even relevant — or illegal — is in question, since Ms. Plame's role as a CIA operative was widely known in Washington before her name was published. Her husband was out criticizing the administration for supposedly ignoring a report he wrote dismissing the idea that Iraq had tried to buy nuclear material from Africa. She was mired deeply in the political mess.

So, it's quite possible no crime was committed. Nevertheless, the prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald, has pushed ahead to jail the reporters. Judge Thomas Hogan found them in contempt in October, but just this month got around to jailing Ms. Miller.

The whole thing points up the need for a shield law to allow reporters to keep sources confidential. More than two-thirds of the states (Kansas not included) have one. The federal government, which needs more watchdogs than most states, definitely needs one.

Nationally, newspaper and First Amendment groups are renewing the push for a shield law, not because reporters want special privileges, but because the watchdogs need to be able to shield their sources.

We all lose when no one can investigate the government. And *New York Times* reporters may not be the most popular, warm and fuzzy element in our society, but they do serve a noble purpose.

Judy Miller thinks it's worth missing summer with her son. That's quite a commitment. — Steve Haynes

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Silence can be very loud sometimes

You know what woke me up this morning? The sounds of silence. (Hey, that would make a neat song title.)

No, really. It was so quiet in the house, it woke me up.

When you live in an old house like we do, without central air conditioning, you get used to the noise of fans and window units running night and day.

Last night we went to bed during the rain storm and sometime early this morning the electricity went out. That meant everything shut down except for the battery-operated clock in the bathroom and the cell phones.

Without a fan moving the air, it was too stuffy to sleep so we got up.

Lucky for us we have an old gas stove that doesn't have an electric ignition.

So, in the semi-darkness, I poured yesterday's leftover coffee into a pan and reheated it and fried some potatoes and eggs for breakfast.

No sense suffering any more than need be.

A little episode like that makes us realize how dependent we are on electrical

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



power. In some countries, it is a luxury. Here, it is a necessity.

—ob—
My oldest daughter, Halley, wrote to tell me she was taking my advice from last week's column and asking for her mother's recipes.

I am to send the following recipes: deviled eggs, rolls, apple pie, potato salad (this one is non-negotiable), pink stuff (which is my mother's recipe for cranberry salad), fajita marinade, Ritz cracker pie, noodles (the ones I really make, not the frozen ones I pawned off for years as homemade), and pecan pie.

Then she nixed the pecan pie, because she thought it would be too hard.

Actually, I just use the recipe on the

back of the Karo syrup bottle. As long as you have the nuts on hand, pecan pie is one of the easiest things to make.

Except for the rolls, Ritz pie and the cranberry salad, my recipes are not what you would call "exact." But, I'm glad she wants them.

—ob—

My sister, Kathryn, called this morning to see how the weather was. She still lives in New York City and said the heat has been beastly this summer.

We had only been on the phone a short time when she said, "Can you hold on a minute? Somebody's at the door."

Later, she came back on the line and begged off, saying she would call back later. A neighbor's cat had just died and her friend was very upset and needed some consoling.

So it makes no difference if you're in the middle of one of the world's largest cities or in the middle of nowhere, when a pet dies, you grieve.

I know when we lose Max, our 17-year-old diabetic cat, Jim will wear black for a long, long time.

Weeding a little at a time is better

I've been getting down and dirty nearly every day, and I love it. It's all part of my new philosophy of gardening — don't try to do it all at once.

I've been taking 10 to 15 minutes most mornings and evenings and working in the garden — weeding, mulching, weeding, planting, weeding, staking, weeding.

As you might have guessed, my biggest job is weeding, and the foxtails, elm trees, dandelions, crab grass and morning glories grow faster than I can pull.

Morning finds me on my knees, wiggling my way through the corn stalks to where I left off the night before. After about 10 minutes of pulling, I carefully back out of the corn with handfuls of weeds and dump them on a pile in the corner of the patio.

The garden isn't perfect, but the 10-to-15-minute regimen has gotten it a lot cleaner and made me a lot happier than the old way.

That was waiting until I had time to weed the garden.

I never had time to weed the garden. There were always the laundry to do, dishes to put away, dinner to fix, stories to edit and naps to take. There was never

Open Season Cynthia Haynes



that hour I needed to weed the garden. And if their was time, it was too hot or too dry to weed.

You can't got out in 99-degree heat at midday to garden. And you can't expect the weeds to come out by their roots if the ground is so dry that the tomato plants are requesting glasses of water.

Now, we water twice a week at night and by 8 or 9 a.m., the ground is damp but not wet, the air is still cool and the garden is still in the shade of the garage.

I get down on my hands and knees and go for it.

Of course, you can weed standing up and leaning over, but it's hard to breath that way and the next day your back will be killing you.

You could sit down, but we plant things

pretty close together and you'll likely sit on a zucchini that way.

So I sneak into the garden, tiptoeing along the back row of corn to get to the zucchini and yellow squash, or kneeling down and crawling between the rows.

By this time of the year, corn and squash are about all there is left in the main garden.

We have tomatoes, cucumbers and green peppers growing in 36-inch strip on the south side of the house.

This is easy to weed, since all I have to do is kneel in the grass and reach under the plants to pull the interlopers.

Still, it takes two to three 10-minute periods to get the section cleared.

I think if I didn't have so much help from the cats, it might be faster, but they always seem to think that anytime I'm in any part of the garden, I'm in their territory.

The corn and tomato plants make shady places to sleep, and people just don't usually get down nose-to-nose with them.

Well, move it Furball, you're laying on a weed, and I only have another minute and a half today to get rid of it.

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