

Chipping away at your on-line privacy

So, you've just applied for a job at the XYZ Company. During the interview, you are told that, as part of the background check, you are required to give them the passwords to your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Do you?

This is no hypothetical question. Employers around the country are beginning to demand exactly that of existing employees, job applicants and even students. And in the current economy, most are getting away with it.

But just because something isn't illegal doesn't make it moral or ethical. This is just plain wrong. In the same situation, would you give an employer the keys to your house so they could snoop through your drawers and computer? Let them eavesdrop on your personal phone conversations or read your diary?

Most of us would say not only no, but heck no. Looking over your shoulder while you access your own account is no better. Even being asked by an employer to make them a Facebook friend, so someone can monitor your social activities, is no different from being asked to put a microphone in your home.

Some may say that your home is not private, since any number of friends and acquaintances may come and go, but the difference is huge. You invite and control who comes in - it's not arbitrary.

Companies that make such a request of your electronic accounts apparently have no respect for personal privacy or personal freedoms, and are both morally and ethically bankrupt.

Some who have been asked for such access have simply said, "I won't work for a company that would make such a request." But these days, especially if you've been out of work for several months, you may not be able to afford the luxury of refusing.

The problem is significant enough that a bill being considered in the New York legislature - the Social Networking Online Protection Act, or SNOAPA (no, I'm not making that up!) - would make it illegal for employers to require social-account access as a condition of employment or application for a job. And it has teeth - a \$10,000 fine per incident. Maryland passed a similar law earlier this year.

Just because it is not illegal - yet - doesn't make it right, which is why Kansas should be at the forefront of the movement and pass its own bill. Don't wait and be the 49th state.

We have little enough personal privacy these days. Let's try to keep what's left.

- Evan Barnum

Being a responsible worker

Volunteering at the grade school is one of the things I do to be involved in "something beyond myself." The spring semester has been difficult for me, and that resulted in my learning some things about myself. I missed the first week of the semester to attend a retreat. The night before coming home, I started getting sick. This was a respiratory infection, and I was sick for three weeks. I had just gotten over that when I had a repeat echocardiogram; the results of that sent me to a cardiologist to be evaluated for surgery. I missed more days of school to see the cardiologist, have more tests, wait for test results and see the cardiologist again.

What I learned was that I have a very strong work ethic. I felt guilty each time I was absent because I had internalized when I was much younger that people show up for work unless they are definitely ill or have arranged to have their shift covered. I went to work at times with colds or when I just didn't feel well. Even when I had jobs that didn't provide the satisfaction I hoped for, I was responsible about being there.

I share this not because I want you to see me as being dependable, but because of what I learned. After missing the time this semester because of the illness and various appointments, I apologized to one of the teachers with whom I worked. She looked at me in surprise and replied, "Rita, you are retired! You are a volunteer here." The other teacher with whom I worked echoed the sentiment when I shared this conversation with her.

My internal response was, "How can you depend on me since I have been gone so much?" It is important to me to be seen as a responsible, reliable person, and my absences diminished those qualities in my own eyes. It was apparent that the same thing wasn't true to either of the teachers. They appreciate what I have done.

I was surprised at how deeply ingrained my work ethic is. I also saw that taking time away does not mean I am not reliable. It is important to me to give of myself but I have to take care of myself as well.

So now the summer lies ahead of me, and I hope to spend time "playing." For me that is working on our yard, knitting, quilting and scrapbooking. Finally, we will get to spend a little time with our granddaughters.

I hope the summer will be a time of rejuvenation and play time for you, too. Peace and Joy.

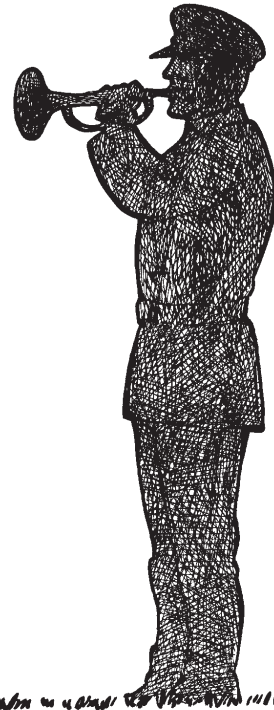
Life is Good

Rita Speer



Memorial Day ~ 2012

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THE HASTINGS TRIBUNE



"For love of country they accepted death."

JAMES A. GARFIELD

So much to do with so little time

I feel like such a failure. Only five chicks hatched out of the 50 I set. Two others cracked through their shell, but could not break out and died. The live ones, though, are cute little black puffs. No way of knowing, yet if we have roosters, pullets or a mix.

I'm not going to give up, though. Tomorrow I'll set a new batch. Not so many this time, and I'll candle them after a few days.

If we don't have better results next time, we're going to "fire" a certain rooster.

-ob-

There's absolutely no way one more function could have been crammed into the weekend. And as busy as we were, we still missed lots of events we wanted to go to. I know of at least one breakfast we missed; know we missed an afternoon tea; missed a quilt exhibit; and I know we missed talking to some people we should have.

Still we did so much I'm looking forward to going to the office today, just so I can get some rest.

My brother, Bob, came for his 65th high school reunion. We all went to the

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



alumni banquet. May I just say right now how disappointed I was that only one representative of the class of 2012 showed up. I know there was a state track meet, but still. A note of apology or something.

Since my peonies, iris and roses had already bloomed and gone, I took my hanging baskets from the front porch and planted them with more purple petunias. The kind that grow long and lush. We hung them on my folks' grave and on Jim's son, Jeremy's grave. We visited all our other family members graves, but that was the best we could do this year.

I cooked all day Saturday in preparation for two big meals on Sunday. One at the little country church where Jim preaches and one at The Haven for all our weekend guests

there. I cooked an 8-pound brisket, ten pounds of potato salad, a triple batch of pasta salad, three dreamy pineapple pies, two Texas sheet cakes and four dozen deviled eggs. If anyone went away hungry, it's their own fault.

-ob-

We have a bad habit of going to sleep with the television playing. About 4 a.m. I was awakened by a woman's screams.

No, it wasn't a murder/mystery. She had just been told that over 25 years ago a long-lost aunt had left an estate of \$91,000 - and she was the only heir. Naturally, she was excited. And, naturally, you would want to know how she got so lucky. Well, for \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling) you could have the book that shows you how to find money the government is holding for unsuspecting heirs. Maybe you're one. Maybe you're not.

Those kind of shows and infomercials for weight-loss products seem to be most prominent. We all want something without having to work for it. As far as diet aids: I'm afraid the only thing that gets any lighter is your wallet.

The Kansas wheat harvest; it is what it is

While combines began cutting in south central Kansas counties at the end of last week, wheat harvest can't come soon enough for most farmers across the state. That's ironic because this year's wheat crop is already two to three weeks early.

Dry heat, above normal temperatures and winds that have whipped what little moisture is left out of many wheat fields across the state has farmers roaring into harvest. While the general census among farmers is there'll still be wheat to harvest, the potential of what might have been looms large across the Kansas landscape.

Less than a month ago the Wheat Quality Council tour estimated the 2012 wheat crop to yield 403.8 million bushels. This figured out to be roughly 45 bushels per acre on the 9.5 million acres planted in Kansas. In three short weeks a lack of moisture dropped this estimate to a 365 million bushel crop.

On the other hand, there remain pockets of optimism across the state. Long-time Sumner County wheat farmer Scott Van Allen says it's been a long time since he's had a good wheat crop. His crop has been fortunate enough to have received the necessary moisture.

"Our crop never really lacked for moisture like I've heard it has in other parts of the state," Van Allen says.

Insight

John Schlageck



"I've got my fingers crossed: we could still have a very good crop."

That very good crop could possibly yield 50-60 bushels-per-acre, weigh in at 60 pounds per bushel and contain a protein level in the mid to upper 11s, the Sumner County wheat producer says.

While attending a Kansas Wheat Commission meeting in Hays on May 18, Van Allen took the southerly route home driving from Kinsley to Hutchison on Highway 50. Here, he saw what he called, "some wheat hurting pretty badly. It was dry, heat stressed and while there will still be wheat harvested - the yield potential got knocked down pretty hard."

Further north and west of Salina farmers also test cut some plots last week. In Phillips County, the wheat crop is turning fast, and barring the slight chance of rains, harvest in some areas may be underway as you read this.

Veteran farmer Doug Zillinger says some of the crop still looks good while the nearly 100 degree heat and 50 mile-

per-hour winds last week are turning some of the wheat white.

"It's sapping what little moisture the wheat has left," Zillinger says. "The wheat condition is deteriorating every day."

The Kansas Agricultural Statistics Services (KSAA) downgraded its crop assessment last week on May 21. KSAA rated the crop 22 percent poor to very poor condition. Thirty-five percent was rated in fair shape, with 36 percent in good and 7 percent in excellent condition.

Wheat farmers know the wheat crop is usually as good as it can be the first week in May. At this stage of maturity, with ideal weather conditions, the crop can either maintain its current status or, if temperatures turn hot and the wind continues to blow, the crop deteriorates quickly.

Unfortunately that's what happened this year. The wheat headed south beginning in early May.

The 2012 wheat crop will be a mixed bag for sure. Some farmers will harvest good yielding crops and others will not. Those producers will once again begin to think and dream about the great crop next year.

Most farmers are realists. They understand whatever the yields wind up being when they haul the crop to the bin - that's what it'll be.

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