

## Our lives caught in high-resolution

A nationwide study by the American Civil Liberties Union reveals that the cops know just not whether you've been naughty or nice – but where you've been doing it.

Agencies, mostly city and county departments, are using license-tag scanners, cameras programmed to record licenses and their location, all day and all night. Located on a patrol car, on bridges or buildings, anywhere they can "see" traffic, these cameras are remarkably efficient.

Minneapolis, with just eight units, captured 4.9 million locations in the first eight months of last year. They got the mayor's car 41 times. At first, police treated the database as a public record. Anyone could come ask for a report on any tag. Later, they decided the information was "classified."

As more and more cameras appear, more agencies join the movement, more vehicles are logged, the information increasingly goes into regional data bases that can produce a remarkably detailed picture of our daily activities.

It is, the union says, "a single high-resolution image of our lives."

"There's just a fundamental question of whether we're going to live in a society where these dragnet surveillance systems become routine," said Catherine Crump, a staff lawyer with the organization.

The group says it wants police departments to delete information on all vehicles except those actually linked to a crime, but of course, that's part of the beauty of the system. Your car might not be linked to a crime today, but who knows when someone might want to know where you've been?

People have no expectation of privacy when driving or parked on a public street, one police official noted. And that's true enough. Departments have checked licenses and logged locations for years, but until now, it was a low-efficiency game.

And true enough, we're all tracking ourselves by carrying cell phones, global positioning devices and other electronic gear. We walk on streets surveilled by cameras and pass through security at the airport.

The question the study asks is, "Do we really need Big Brother watching our every move?"

Some will say, if you're not doing anything wrong, why worry? The government will reassure us that we have nothing to fear, the scanners are only to track the bad guys. But they said that about the Internal Revenue Service.

In our view, no agency needs to gather and store this kind of information. Government agencies of all types already have way too much data stored away on citizens. And it's not just an innocent system designed to catch bad guys.

Information is power, and when "they" have enough, it could come to the point where the citizens are no longer in charge.

No one should have that kind of power. As citizens, we need to take a stand now, before it's too late.

— Steve Haynes

### On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



## Caring for cats, grass and kids

We haven't hung a black wreath on the door, covered the mirrors or donned black armbands, but we are mourning the loss of one of our cats. "Sissy", so named because she was a sister to "Sammy the Siamese", was killed by a wayward dog.

After booting all three of the cats, Sissy, Missy and Bootsie, to the outdoors, we feared one of them would be hit by a passing car. All three seemed to like "dirt baths" in the middle of the street. We don't have many unleashed dogs in the neighborhood and cats can usually escape up a tree.

What made it worse, the guilty dog is being kept by son, James, and his wife, Charlotte, as a favor to its owner, her son Sean, while he finishes school. The kids felt so bad when they came to tell us what happened. They knew how much Jim loved that cat. It wasn't long before we were all in tears.

Charlotte was especially guilt-ridden and kept blaming herself. Jim told her, "I will miss her, but it was just a cat. Your feelings are more important to me than any cat. So don't cry. I'm not mad at you. I'm not even mad at the dog. He was just doing what dogs do."

We buried Sissy the next morning. Right beside Sammy and Snuggles and Max and Petey. We don't have funerals for our pets, but we did say, "She was a good cat."

-ob-

I may have to mortgage the house to pay the water bill, but I am committed to keeping the new trees and the garden we planted alive this summer. Extreme

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



heat and all. Watering has become my life. I have hoses on three sides of the house, north, south and west. The north hose is the longest and it waters all the new trees planted to the north, the new trees across the street east and my flowers in front of the house. It also assists the west hose in flooding the tomato plants every other day. The west hose, when it's not watering tomatoes, gets drug to the alley to keep troughs of water filled for the calves, it waters the chickens and anything else that puts on leaves or flowers on the west side of the house. The south hose waters the perennial flowers by a fence, sidewalk planters, trees and rose bushes on the south side. There have been times all three hoses were running, full blast, at the same time. The old water meter was really spinning.

-ob-

Even in our over-sensitive, politically correct society, I do not object to corporal punishment. Yes, I know children can be raised without spanking. I also know there are times when a swift "pop" on the seat of learning is in order. I told my girls that I spanked them while they were little so I wouldn't have to spank them when

they got bigger. After the age of five or six, I never had to spank either one of them.

Sunday morning we were hustling across the street to church by way of the side door. Just then a young mother, with her 5-year old son in tow, burst through the door and said, "Don't watch, Carolyn," as she delivered two, sound swats to his backside, followed by, "Now, we're going back in there and you will behave."

I told her, "You don't have to apologize to me. I'm all for it."

Her fear was that she might be reported for abusing her child. I assured her, it would not come from me. Jim remembers his dad taking him, more than once, to the front steps of the old country church building for a little "Come to Jesus" moment.

How sad is it that parents have to be worried about disciplining their children in public for fear of being reported to Child Protective Services? Too many parents are already afraid of correcting their children for fear the child won't like them, let alone some snoopy "do-gooder" who lives down the street.

There's lots of scripture in Proverbs about child discipline. Best known perhaps is, "He who spares the rod, hates his child." "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is often attributed to the Bible. It's a great quote and good advice, but it's not in there.

So parents unite. Be the mommy or be the daddy. Your child won't hate you. In fact, they will be assured you love them.

## Food innovation is progress

Seems like not a day goes by without a media story on our country's food supply. Some folks have concluded that the best plate may be an empty plate. How else are they going to avoid killer popcorn, monster tomatoes, drug-treated cattle, radioactive chicken or toenail hotdogs?

Some would argue we do not need GMOs. Others would say keep all antibiotics out of livestock. A few would even argue we have too much food and this is what has led to this nation's obesity problem.

If you are overwhelmed by news reports that question the safety of your food, you're not alone. What can we do?

To begin with, exercise common sense.

Overconsumption and obesity are indeed health hazards, but generally speaking food scientists do not believe specific foods are health villains.

Most of us depend on advanced agricultural practices and food technology to give us an abundant, safe,

### Insight

John Schlageck



reliable and affordable food supply. As the world's population continues to increase, U.S. farmers and ranchers need to continue to find new ways to produce more food, more efficiently. Much of the world continues to face food shortages that our country can address.

Why shouldn't we have access to delicious fruits and vegetables all year round, especially when the increased intake of such food items has been scientifically proven to be healthy and reduce the risk of disease?

Technology critics have been around since the first caveman rounded off the square edges of a stone block and chiseled out the first wheel. People

fought the coming of steam locomotives and buggy makers cried out against the coming of the Model T.

Food irradiation and bioengineered foods can be summarized in one word – progress.

Food safety has always been an emotional issue. Reactions to some of these food scares confirm the old adage that a rumor can travel half way around the world before the truth pulls on its boots.

Too often today, most news translates to bad news. The prospect of sensationalism is often irresistible and easier than digging a bit deeper and finding the truth.

If more scientists stepped forward to correct this misinformation we would all be better off.

Until that occurs, be wary of food scares. On the other hand, don't forget to eat and drink from our food supply brought to you by this nation's farmers and ranchers. It remains the safest, best tasting in the world.

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Thumbs up to everyone that has made the Elmwood Park look so lovely for the Norton County Fair; and also the Prairie Dog State Park is just beautiful. Called in.

Thumbs up to Doug Sebelius on his quote: "One more item raised (by the law) because it can be, is politics, this issue has degenerated to wartime posturing. It's us versus them. My rights and yours be damned" said Sebelius. I agree with that 100 percent. The best two congressmen we ever had were Keith Sebelius and Bob Dole. Called in.



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