

Opinion

Your turn

Cookie time

**By Linda Mills, CEO Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council
2707 Vine, Suite 8Hays, Kan. 67601**

As children, the possibilities were limitless and we placed no boundaries on ourselves or the opportunities presented to us.

Girls throughout northwest Kansas are currently dreaming of their future and you can help make their dreams come true by purchasing a box of Girl Scout cookies. Since 1912, Girl Scouts of the USA has dedicated itself to helping girls navigate the sometimes rocky, often funny, and at times bewildering world of growing up. With family support and under the supervision of dedicated volunteers and staff, through a variety of carefully-designed activities, the Girl Scout organization cultivates courage, confidence, and character in girls while teaching them critical life skills they will need to succeed as adults.

One of the most respected and well known Girl Scout activities is the annual Girl Scout Cookie Program. Through this activity, girls learn the importance of personal responsibility, the value of goal-setting, the spirit of teamwork and the thrill of accomplishment. As they take orders for America's favorite tasty treats, girls ages 6-17 learn about business ethics, customer service, marketing, advertising and money management. Additionally, they build confidence by developing public speaking and interpersonal communication skills. When delivery time rolls around, they learn the importance of fulfilling commitments. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is indeed the nation's premier financial literacy and entrepreneurship program.

In addition to developing and strengthening skills, the cookie program revenue helps Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council supply essential services to troops, groups and individual girls, such as providing program resources and communication support, training adult volunteers and conducting special events. Proceeds from last year's cookie program enabled the Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council to offer more than 20 events including a Brownie Girl Scout Museum Trek, Junior Girl Scout trip to Kearney, Neb., and X-Treme Rappelling. In addition, the council awards a Gold Award Scholarship each year and supplies camping and safety equipment for the troops. In October, two high school Girl Scouts from Sunflower Council traveled to Atlanta, Ga., for an all-expense paid trip to the National Convention and Girl Congress Meeting. Furthermore, cookie proceeds have recently helped troops; to earn wildlife badges with trips to Rolling Hills Refuge, science badges at Exploration Place, and fun at Worlds of Fun; to pay their 2005-06 membership dues; and to purchase supplies for community service projects. For more information on our annual Girl Scout Cookie Program, which started Friday and runs through Jan. 23, or other ways you can help girls navigate the mystifying path to adulthood, just contact Girl Scouts of Sunflower Council at 785-625-5671 or email gssc@ruraltel.net.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

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What's the deal?

The week between Christmas and New Year's, I got bored one evening after doing the normal household routine and settled in to watch the most viable entertainment option available.

That particular night it happened to be an old James Bond movie. Which one doesn't matter, but what I saw during a commercial break and more than several times since has managed to raise my ire.

A trailer for a movie called "Hostel" got hyped more over the past two weeks than the latest "Harry Potter" flick, "King Kong" or even "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

It bugged more than a little.

Why?

In my opinion, it's just one more example of how tasteless things have gotten.

This particular movie advertisement talked about graphic violence, without really stepping over the line and showing any, but it strongly hinted at it.

When I saw that, all I could think was what if somebody's kid saw that?

Granted, children these days probably see and hear a lot of things they shouldn't, but still, it bugged me.

The same week, another advertisement caught my attention.

A show called "The Book of Daniel," which was set to debut on NBC Friday, Jan. 6, drew fire from all sides before it even aired, and some NBC affiliates refused to air it.

I heard early Friday the Kansas NBC affiliates in Wichita and Garden City didn't plan on airing it, but Friday night, it was indeed on.

OK—I can admit "Hostel" bugged me, but the

Tisha Cox
● Off The Beaten Path

television show "Daniel" actually looked kind of funny. I did watch for a bit and it was indeed interesting. A little over the top, but entertaining.

And that, I think, is important to remember. We watch television, go the movies, read, or whatever, for entertainment and diversion. Yes, sometimes even education, but mainly the escapism it offers from the real world.

If it's offensive, I recommend finding something else to watch, or do, or, if people want to do something about what they're seeing, write the network and contact the FCC.

After all, it worked two years ago after the Super Bowl and Janet Jackson's now infamous "wardrobe malfunction."

Things haven't changed too much since that. The likes of Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan still prance unhealthily about, setting an even more disturbing example.

In the time since I grew from a kid to an adult, the standards of what are "acceptable" have changed. I know it's something every generation deals with, but what do you do when standards have seemingly slipped so far?

Fight back, that's what.

I know I sometimes seem like I'm out in left field, but I can say lately, I'm glad more and more people are taking a stand for good taste.

Take for example "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

It had some violence, and magic, but many people took their kids to see it, and has been popular with churches and youth groups. It was also a literary staple from my own childhood, and that of my younger sister.

Given our divergent tastes, it was something we could both agree upon.

I would like to see more family-friendly entertainment. Even though I don't have kids, it doesn't mean I can't sympathize with those who do.

It's tougher than ever to find something that can be considered "suitable" for all ages.

Movie ratings have even changed. That PG rating stuck to some movies these days would apply to PG-13 movies when I was a kid. (The first movie released to get that rating was 1984's "Red Dawn. Ironically enough, the creation of the rating was prompted by the problems people had with "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.")

Despite questionable modern tastes, it's nice to see what could be considered good taste still exists.

I just hope the people who are in charge of creating the entertainment we watch and read get the message.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tc Cox@nwkansan.com.

Watch what you say - they're listening

By Colonel Daniel M. Smith

It's hard to discuss the unknown, especially when, to paraphrase Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, you don't know that you don't know.

Almost as hard is discussing the unknown when you know you don't know — e.g., what the future holds.

Then there are the artificial unknowns that arise not from biological limitations or inadequate technology but from one individual, group, or institution with information refusing to share it. This sets in motion a spiraling descent into paranoia as those in the know come to believe the others will stop at nothing to discover the secret. Thus reasoned, the ins interpret the actions of the outs as a potential internal threat (fifth column) that must be carefully monitored.

Of course, having started down this road, the ins soon subdivide into inner — ins and outer — ins, with the former suspicious of and watching the latter. Eventually, a small, powerful group emerges — the inner most — ins. Only they know the highest secrets — including the ones that are so secret that they cannot be discussed with anyone else.

Although not one of the ins, I too have a secret. You may already know it; if not, I'll tell you. (We could then be our own in-crowd.) I learned it from that universal sage, Unknown: When government becomes more fearful of its citizens and their rights than protective of them, the future holds only despotism and extinction.

We saw the slide in this direction during the 1960s and 1970s. Successive U.S. administrations exhibited profound distrust, even disdain, for those who challenged government by exercising the civil and political rights provided in

the Constitution. Impassioned Vietnam War protestors and civil rights advocates believed they could force changes in government policy and practice if they but persisted. Fearing the same outcomes, officials secretly tasked intelligence agencies normally focused on external enemies — the Pentagon and the CIA — to gather, record, and exchange information with internal U.S. law enforcement agencies about, U.S. persons (citizens and legal residents) participating in anti-Washington events anywhere in the country. When the Army snooping ended in 1971, it had records on more than 100,000 civilians. Clearly, government feared the citizenry and the power of their protests to attract increasing numbers of believers.

Following two investigations in 1975 and 1976, reforms were put in place that barred the CIA and the Pentagon from spying on and maintaining records on U.S. persons residing in the United States. And although the nation avoided despotism then, the potential remained.

Almost 35 years later, the Army has been caught spying on a new generation (seasoned with a few old-timers) of anti-war and anti-military recruiting activists. Mainstream media obtained a 400-page dossier of some 1,500 suspicious organizations or activities the Army labeled threats, including a small group of locally known, non-confrontational, part-time counter-recruiting activists who openly gathered in the local Quaker Meeting House. Members of the group were puzzled by the Army's characterization but not by the fact that the military is again spying on citizens engaged in legal political activities.

This Talon (Threat And Local Observation Notice) program is not an anomaly. The admin-

istration, insisting that new times and new dangers — terrorism — can only be countered by expanded, secret powers, has challenged legal and traditional barriers governing the employment of military intelligence inside the United States in the civilian arena. Thus evolved the Pentagon's 2002 to 2003 Total Information Awareness (TIA) data mining project to recreate the lives of every terrorist in order to preempt future attacks. And because anyone might become a terrorist, TIA applied to everything done by everyone alive.

The program that has caused such uproar in legal and judicial circles is the presidentially directed warrantless interception by the National Security Agency.

It spies on electronic communications involving people with known links to al Qaeda and related terrorist organizations. Citing still secret internal — and therefore undoubtedly highly biased — administration legal opinions, Mr. Bush declared he was empowered by the Constitution, statute, and legal precedent to order the surveillance without seeking warrants from a court.

Although few outside the administration agree, Mr. Bush remains defiant — which makes one wonder what super — secret unknown exists behind his NSA program. That one can spy on any of us.

— — —

Colonel Daniel M. Smith (Ret.), a West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran, is the Senior Fellow for Military Affairs at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. FCNL is a Quaker — based public interest lobby founded in 1943. FCNL is headquartered in Washington, D.C. www.fcnl.org

Doonesbury

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