



Free Press Viewpoint

Surveillance limits scarcely believable

The revelations continue about the government's secret surveillance system and the vast expansion of federal power it implies, all supervised by closed-door congressional committees and a federal court that meets – and decides – in secret.

Of course, we're assured that we have no reason to fear this system or the court that supervises it. The powers granted the government by the Patriot Act – a dangerous law with an Orwellian name – and later additions are to be used only against foreign enemies of the government.

Officials from the president down promise that only foreign intelligence targets, some of them perhaps operating within the U.S. and some of them even "U.S. persons," come under the microscope of the security net.

Not the rest of us.

Having seen how easily the Internal Revenue Service, the supposedly incorruptible tax collector, can be subverted for political purposes, however, can we believe the promises of our government?

How much of a stretch is it from fighting the enemies of our government to fighting the enemies of those who happen to be running that government at any given time?

How far does the security apparatus have to bend to use these new-found powers against domestic enemies of the government?

In fact, the Patriot Act and allied laws already are used to track domestic crimes, including money laundering and tax evasion. These laws affect not just terrorists, but everyday Americans who want to open a savings account at their bank or fly on an airplane or use cash to buy something.

It's virtually illegal today to use large amounts of cash. The law presupposed that you must be doing something shady. You have to prove the opposite if the government asks, and they'll keep your cash for you meantime.

It's not just the intelligence agencies that want these powers. The tax collectors want them. The drug cops want them. All law enforcement would like to have these powers.

And if they would be used only against the bad guys, why then, who cares?

History shows that might not always be the case. Powers taken by the government tend to be used for the government's purpose, and eventually, that becomes the preservation of the government. It's but a short slide down this slippery slope to something very different.

Our country has always held the dark forces of government at bay. Now, in the name of fighting terrorists, they stand ready to take the reins.

The thought of a secret court, making thousands of secret rulings every year, building a body of law no one ever sees, is frightening. The thought of where this could lead, more so.

The intelligence court, comprising 25 federal judges from around the country chosen by the chief justice, and meeting in a secure room at the federal courthouse in Washington, surely must be defending our rights today, despite all the snooping into phone and Internet records.

But how will we know that? And how will we know next year or the year after what has followed, when everything is done in secret?

Are the terrorists, in the end, the real threat? Will we even know when the line is crossed?

It's about time this box was opened. – Steve Haynes

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
friedlander@nwkansas.com

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan., 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



After several weeks, she's dancing again

My doctor will be so proud of me.

Five weeks ago, I was in a hospital bed getting blood because my red-cell count had bottomed out. On the Fourth of July, I was dancing at almost 9,000 feet elevation.

I'm not saying I was dancing the Cotton-Eyed Joe or that I danced for long, just two or three dances, a couple of slow ones, swing dancing to a fast tune. And sit down. But I was upright and gliding across the floor in Steve's arms at the old Elks Lodge in Creede, Colo.

In between my hospital stay and my stint on the dance floor, I did two things. I stopped taking an over-the-counter pain medication I had been taking for a long time for an elbow problem and I had a small operation to remove the source of my bleeding.

Those two things, both of which I should have done a long time ago, probably saved my life. That, and a visit to the doctor because I was feeling so weak and my head felt like there was a windmill up there pounding away.

I've never been sick much, and it took a bit to prompt me to go see the doctor, but he and



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

the surgeon fixed me up, and I've been on rehab for the last month or so.

We had been planning to go to Creede the day after I got slapped in the hospital and pumped full of new blood.

Every time we come out here, however, it takes most of week to get used to the altitude, and the first few days we're pretty sluggish.

I realized that even with the normal red-cell count, there isn't enough oxygen up here to make me feel good for the first few days. With a low count like I had last month, I would probably just get altitude sick and end up in the emergency room.

So that trip was canceled.

But last week, I was feeling good. My blood count wasn't quite up to normal, but it was close. If I just relaxed and didn't try to do too much, I figured, I'd be fine.

Besides, we really needed to get out to see what the fires, which are still burning, had done to the area.

All our friends were OK, and so far, no houses have been lost. I took it easy for most of a week. We took gentle walks and finally, the last two days, we went on some easy trail hikes.

But what do you say to your friends when they greet you with, "Hey, long time no see. How're you doing?"

Well, you lie, of course.

"Great. Fine. Good to see you too."

And then, one day, it really isn't a lie at all.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Poor parents produce better students

I sit on graduate student examination panels in China. There is a terrible burden felt by most students here that is rarely felt by students in the United States. In many cases in China, the extended family, including grandparents on both sides, have invested and sacrificed heavily to support their child or grandchild's education. Four grandparents' and two parents' security in old age often depends on the student's success.

If the Chinese student fails their masters or doctoral defense, the whole family fails. Instead of going ahead into a well-paying job in industry, government or education, that failed student will return to the home community and likely earn less money for the rest of his or her life. Education in China makes a huge difference in income. Unable to provide a secure retirement for parents and grandparents, failed students will live in an extended family where it will go unspoken, a silence that will remind them of their failure every day.

Contrast that with our American attitude toward retirement and education.

"My children will never have to worry about taking care of me when I am old," is a common saying of our older American generation. We are proud of now having a retirement that provides for us. We are not a burden on our children. With social security in place for over 70 years, the elderly in the U.S. are no longer the largest pool of the American poor.

But this statement – that we see as a message of freedom for our children – contains another unconscious message for our children as well. As much as we may praise them for good schoolwork, we are telling them that their



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

academic success is not important for our survival. "Just as long as you are happy in life" is the message they hear. And that frees some American students from one reason to work hard in academics.

American colleges and universities count the number of first-in-family to go to college; today most have college-educated parents. In China, many are first-in-family to finish high school, and well over 90 percent of Chinese students are first-in-family to attend college.

Taking care of parents when they are old is an obligation in Chinese society; it is a tenet of an ancient philosophy that has survived for two millennia. China envies our U.S. social security system, but has not been able to establish it widely in China. Aside from the limited state enterprises where income is measurable, it is difficult to intercept and tax income that often passes hands as cash at the end of each day.

China has brought over 600 million of its people out of poverty in the last 25 years, but has more to do. Recently, thanks to their new economy and a tradition of saving 40 percent of their income, more parents here are gaining the resources to tell their children that they are independent in their old age. Yet the culture of responsibility remains. The grandparents are

helpful in babysitting the grandchildren and they have traditionally resided in the extended household.

But in the undeveloped countryside, the uneducated parents will still need support from their children throughout their life. Many without children will work far into old age. And many villages are losing all of their younger families who are migrating to the cities.

It is from the poor undeveloped zones of China that the students feel the most pressure. And failure can lead to suicide, something that almost never happens to a failed student in the West.

Our "G.I. Bill" worked wonders for young adults returning from World War II because their parents and grandparents were closer to the Great Depression and knew hunger. More American families lived with their elderly family members amongst them. There was a greater sense of responsibility then than in modern America today. Back then, being economically poor did make better students in America as well.

With growing affluence, each generation of Chinese students becomes less burdened and less likely to jump from rooftops if they fail their exams.

But is it a better fate to fail and not care, and live the rest of your life in your parent's basement?

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774
roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966.
Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

