

'Patriot Act' allows government to spy on us

Every time you write a check or make a bank deposit, your government may be snooping on you.

Naw, you say. Your government wouldn't do that.

Wrong.

The U.S. government is compiling massive amounts of information about every person who uses the banking system, and this data collection has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years.

The biggest change came with the 2002 passage of the ill-named Patriot Act. That law required banks to seek identification from people who open accounts and increased requirements for reporting bank transactions.

These same rules had been blocked by Congress in the two years before because of legitimate concerns over privacy. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorists attacks, however, all bets were off.

People were demanding protection, and Congress moved quickly to establish the Department of Homeland Security. Snooping provisions that had been shelved were dusted off and shoved into the Patriot Act.

The government said it needed to be able to track terrorist money coming into the U.S. To do that, it got permission to snoop on every one of us.

Just the financial cost of this law is burdensome. Banks have to check identification when people open or change an account. Bankers look people they have known for years in the eye and demand that they prove just who they are.

All this paperwork is expensive, with nationwide costs in the billions. It's piled on top of tons of paperwork banks already produce for the Internal Revenue Service and bank examiners. This is a major expense in banking, an expense that customers have to pay.

To what benefit?

Is it likely that the government can track a few dozen terrorists by watching the bank accounts of millions of Americans?

Not hardly. It's possible, but not likely. If past experience is any guide, officials would ignore the terrorist accounts until it was too late, then call for more laws.

Meantime, they're building a nifty data bank on all of us.

Government agents can check on your bank activity. Your bank can't even tell you when it happens.

The same is true of your library. Terrorists might check out books on making bombs. Agents, operating under the Patriot Act, can check up on what you've been reading. The librarian is barred by law from telling you about the snooping.

Many members of Congress now rue the day they voted for this ill-conceived and dangerous law, but the damage is done. Public outrage over the terrorist attacks created an opening to pass anything in the name of "security."

There is no sentiment now to repeal any of its provisions, despite the obvious threat to privacy and civil rights.

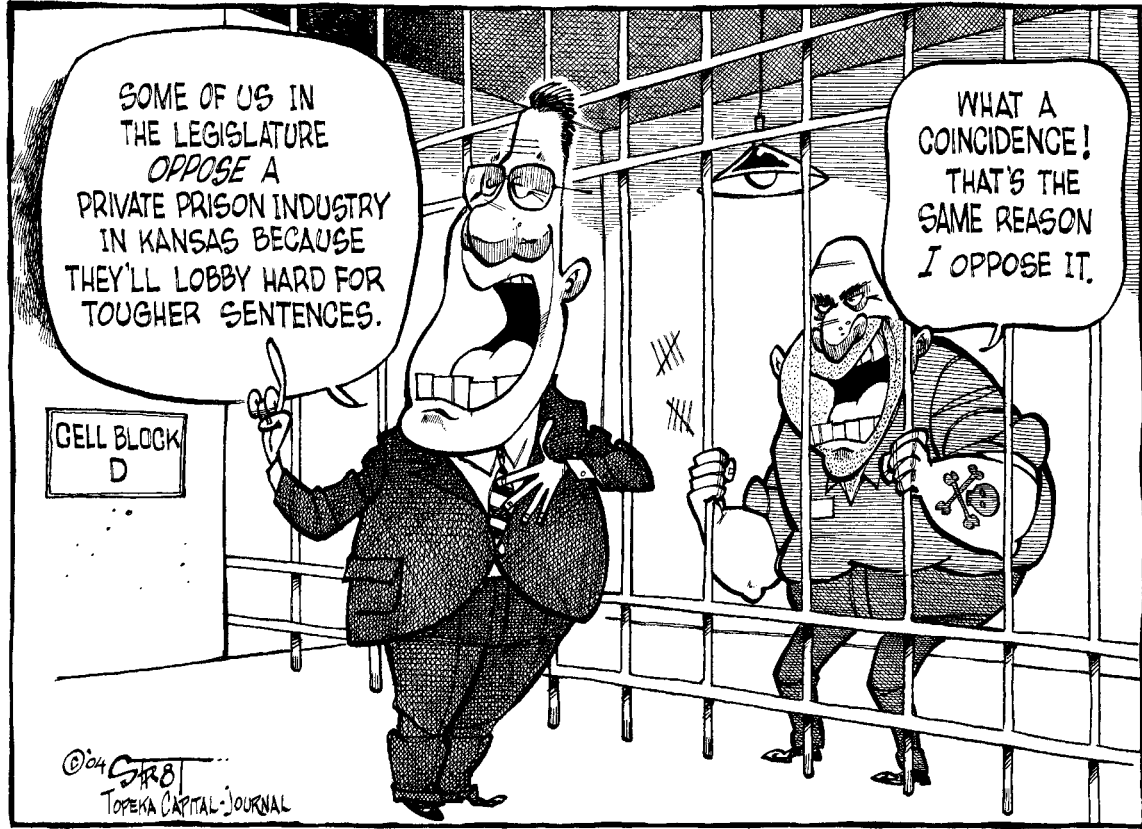
Powers once given to the government are seldom taken away.

It seems odd that this massive breach of rights has occurred under a supposedly conservative Republican president.

But under George Bush, the federal government has seized control of local schools with the No Child Left Behind Act, and pushed itself into a dozen different openings. The Patriot Act is simply the greatest threat to liberty. It's far from the only symptom of Big Brotherism.

Patriot Act, indeed. It's a law in the best tradition of George Orwell's "1984."

— Steve Haynes



'The Passion' an experience

What can I say about "The Passion" that hasn't already been said?

Knowing that it was premiering in a neighboring town last Wednesday, I contacted the theater owner at his home to see if he was pre-selling tickets. He assured me that if someone showed up at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday night when the box office opened, they could buy tickets to the next evening's performance. I made sure Jim was there. The first show was sold out, but he came home, proudly displaying two tickets for the 9:30 p.m. viewing.

I'm guessing there were about 100 people in the theater that Wednesday night. There was the usual laughing and buzz of conversation you would expect as the audience waited for the lights to go down.

I'm not going to critique the show or tell you what I think. I don't want to spoil it for you or diminish it in any way, if you choose to experience "The Passion." I say "experience," because you don't merely "see" this movie. But, I will say this: when that crowd left the theater after the lights came back up, after wiping away the tears and blowing their noses, it was in stunned silence that they walked to their cars.

It's not a movie for children. Parents should see it first then decide if their child is mature enough, emotionally and spiritually, to see it. And even then, parents should watch it with their kids so they can answer questions.

This is not a time to just drop the kids off at the theater and tell them



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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to call you when they need a ride home. If your kids are way too young to see it, buy the video when it comes out and save it for them. It will become a timeless tool.

—ob—

Finally! Rain! Jim's rain gauge (a bucket in the back yard) looks like it contains about an inch and a half. It's not exact, but close enough. Since we haven't had any measurable moisture for so long, who cares if we're off a hundredth or two. It's wet. It's muddy. And we love it.

We just about got stuck right in front of the house as we were leaving for church Sunday morning, but some fancy steering and front-wheel drive pulled us through.

Makes me think of that old saying, "The success of a rain dance depends a lot on timing."

—ob—

My friend Sonia wrote saying she loved my column on housekeeping. She said it made her look good and she was going to show it to her mother-in-law.

This week I get to prove what I said about being a good house cleaner. We are having a dinner party Saturday night and from the

looks of this place, we ought to claim we've been burglarized. This morning Jim asked me what I'm making for dinner that night. I answered, "Reservations." He almost didn't laugh.

Oh, please. I hope you know it's not that bad. And we love to have company. I might fuss around getting ready, but when friends arrive, I forget that I didn't dust the knick-knacks or vacuum under the sofa. And I sure hope when someone invites me over to dinner they don't worry about trying to impress me.

From the Bible

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. Romans 2:1, 2

Oberlin residents open their hearts

To the Editor:

Oberlin is a "blessed" town, blessed with many kind hearts who unceremoniously go about their everyday lives, performing the necessities of life under less than the best of conditions. However, when an opportunity for open-hearted sharing comes along, they are eager to say, "count me in." I, for one, am pleased and proud to live in such a warm town.

When I first moved here from Tennessee, I had thoughts of retirement, maybe opening a small business and perhaps giving to my newly adopted community what little I could. After the first year of my computer business, I struck upon the idea of taking the used trade-in computers and refurbishing them, then giving those to youngsters who, under circumstances beyond their control, couldn't afford a computer. The principals from our schools indicated to me certain kids who fell into that criterion.

Soon, I found that each of the businesses in town, as they purchased a new unit from me, wanted to participate in my endeavor. Some of the folks in town also wanted their used units to be given away as well. So, here is my "thank you" list:

Ken and Christie Morris —

Letters to the Editor

Macintosh computer, given to Boy and Girl Scouts.

The City Offices (Gateway) — three computers given to various children in town.

American Legion and Auxiliary — some members donated money for needed parts.

Terry and Brian of T&B Enterprises — Hewlett-Packard system. Decatur County Title and Abstract — two twin units, given to a brother and sister in the area (thanks, Vicky).

Charlie Corcoran, one of our town's greatest assets.

Oberlin Clinic and the hospital

board for donating a basement full of parts.

The Bank (thanks, Gary).

The L-7 Ranch (Dottie and Floyd Lotker) — used unit and printer.

Joe Stanley of Stanley Hardware for "word of mouth" advertising.

Tammy Sporn for her "word of mouth" advertising.

Col. Gary Allen and Carolyn — used parts and moral support.

Also, there are some who wish to remain silent cooperators. To each and all of you, I say thanks, and God bless you in the coming years.

Walt Pennell
Oberlin

Reader loved contest

To the Editor:

Thank you for sponsoring the "best poker hand" Valentine's promotion. It was fun and I was pleased to see that my three fours helped me

to win the beautiful bouquet of roses. It made my day!

With much appreciation,

Denise Abbey
Oberlin



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We need to stop gay marriage

To the Editor:

We have heard a lot about "gay marriage" in the news lately. Some people might say, "It's a free country. Just let people who love each other get married regardless of their gender." But it's not that simple.

As a Christian, I am against gay marriage because the Bible is against it. But I found it interesting that most other major religions in the world are also against homosexuality and gay marriage. I have other reservations, however, besides religious ones. If we allow homosexual marriages, what is next? Do we then allow pedophilic marriages, incestuous marriages or polygamous marriages?

Studies have shown that some of the benefits of traditional marriage are: adults who are healthier, happier, safer, wealthier and longer-lived. They produce children who are also healthier in body, spirit, and mind, more successful in school and life, and much less likely to use illegal drugs and alcohol, or otherwise get in trouble with the law. Traditional marriages reduce public welfare costs, raise government revenues and produce citizens interested in bettering life for themselves and others.

Homosexuals, on the other hand, impose substantial costs on society. The fact that AIDS is at least 10 times more common among men having sex with men than among the general population is just one example. Those in the gay lifestyle also suffer high rates of suicide, de-

Letters to the Editor

pression, drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and other pathogens.

Research has also shown that children raised by homosexuals were more often dissatisfied with their own gender, experienced a greater rate of molestation, and had homosexual experiences more often.

A study of homosexual men in the Netherlands (the first country to legalize marriage for same-sex couples) found that the average length of "steady partnerships" was no more than two years. They also found that these men had an average

of eight "casual" sex partners per year.

Do homosexuals really want to participate in the institution of marriage, or are they more interested in getting society's stamp of approval on their relationships?

If you would like to support a federal marriage amendment that defines marriage as between one man and one woman, go to nogaymarriage.com to sign a petition that will be sent to our congressmen.

Janice Ganje
Oberlin

Jennings school 'open'

To the Editor:

There seems to be a number of rumors and talk concerning the possibility of the Jennings school closing next year. We wish to inform you that the rumors and talk you hear are just that — rumors.

School will be in session next year, educating your children to the best of our abilities. The board has no intention of closing the school and will keep the district running for as long as it is possible. At this time, we have a full schedule of athletic events for both the junior and senior high school.

The projections are that it should be possible to continue for some time yet, assuming no unforeseen problems develop that are beyond the board's control. The board wishes to thank you for the support that you have shown for the school district in the past and will be looking forward to future years of educating your children.

President Lawrence Carter
Vice President Vickie Bailey
Larry Miller, Sarah Carter, Lila Jennings, board members
Lee Stieben, superintendent
Prairie Heights School District

Reader wants more Jennings news

To the Editor:

Enclosed is my subscription renewal for another year. I continue to wish there could be more Jennings news in the paper.

I had the good fortune to go to Antarctica last month. The ice formations are truly spectacular, and the penguins very interesting. I saw a wide variety of birds, orca and humpback whales, hundreds of penguins, and several seals. When sailing across Drake's Passage back to Ushuaia, Argentina, the world's southernmost city, we experienced

waves in excess of 65 feet. They really rocked the ship!

In the late 1930s, when I was young and my father was sheriff of Decatur County, I recall marveling at how he knew his way all over the county. Then later, I discovered that he could find his way anywhere in the state of Kansas. Well, that seems trivial by today's standards. I have

been blessed to travel to all seven continents, all 50 states, and to 40 foreign countries.

And, Jennings is still my favorite piece of real estate — mostly because of the good people who live there.

Jack J. Bainter, Ed.D.
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