

Does secrecy deter terror, or simply hide problems?

Secret laws? Well, the war on terrorism has given us secret courts and secret detention camps, so it shouldn't be any surprise.

Americans are finding that, under the rather badly named Patriot Act, security regulations are written and put in place without the public ever knowing.

A former member of Congress from Idaho was denied boarding at a western airport when she asked to see the regulation that allowed screeners to pat her down.

"That's secret," they said. She reportedly hasn't flown since. Some of this may make sense.

If it's the actual operating plan we're talking about — how screeners select which persons to pat down — there may be information there that we don't want terrorists to know. The authority to search is something anyone who asks should be able to see.

As is usual, though, the bureaucracy tends to expand the definition of that which requires secrecy. Give them an inch, and they'll take a mile, as it were.

As federal control over all types of transportation expands, people are beginning to realize that the government has a reason to keep secret whatever it wants.

Opponents of hauling nuclear waste around, for instance, fear that they'll never again have any idea when and where shipments are moving.

People who like to watch trains and planes are being reported to the police, possibly entered into national databases, maybe earning a file at the FBI. Screeners probably make a record of anyone who protests security procedures.

Security is important. The threat of terrorism is real, but while there are things that should not be made public, there are dangers here.

The government may not want terrorists to know how security operates, but it's impossible for Americans to judge the quality of our security services when their work is secret.

We need to know that these things work. The government might argue that it doesn't want terrorists to know our weaknesses, but it's just as possible to use secrecy to cover a bad job or a bad plan.

Our open society is going to suffer as secret government grows, and the worst part is, we won't have any idea how big these operations have become.

The government, for our own good, isn't going to tell us what it's doing.

It'd be easy to dismiss these fears, but the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. If we don't keep an eye on our government, we may wake up some day to find that it is keeping more than an eye on us.

Maybe the terrorists won't win, but if we let that happen, we won't, either.

— Steve Haynes

Daughter's home in demand

When our daughter Jennifer moved here a little over two years ago, she had no idea that the historic Victorian house she bought would put her in such high demand.

From the very first year, the Christmas Homes Tour committee had been asking her to let them put her house on the tour. She didn't feel like she was ready until this year. And even then, she had reservations.

But, I kept "knoodging" (it's an old Jewish saying) her to do it with promises of, "We'll (meaning, mostly, her dad) help you get ready. It'll be fun. Don't worry (another old Jewish saying)."

Jennifer always has projects going. Her vision for her home has developed in stages. First was interior painting, then window coverings, crown molding in all the rooms, staining interior doors, installing French doors, a new front door and a swinging door into the kitchen. That was just the first year.

Landscaping began her first summer with the total removal of the front yard, new grass, new shrubs, a berm, rocks hauled in and flowers planted. I get tired just watching her work, because all this is in addition to her regular 60- or 70-hour work week for a major software company.

Now, fast-forward to the first of November. "Mom, Dad," Jennifer began, "the Homes Tour is less than two months away. Do you remember what you said? I really want doors put on those shelves, and I want that chandelier moved, please."

"Sure, sure," we said. "No problem. We're there for 'ya, honey."

Next thing we knew, it was Thanksgiving. Then I hurt my back. Before we knew it, two more weeks



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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had flown by and the doors still weren't on the shelves, the chandelier still hadn't been moved, and Jennifer was starting to get nervous. Very nervous.

Since Jim and I both work best under pressure, we weren't worried. Last week, Jim got started on her doors, and she and I designed her "tablescape" according to protocol on Home and Garden TV.

Saturday, the day before the tour, brought a decorating flurry unlike anything I had ever seen before. Greenery garlands were everywhere, Victorian Santas filled corners, the chandelier was moved, a new fixture hung, sterling was polished to a gleam, and china was placed just so.

About 6 p.m. Jennifer said, "I don't know. The tree still needs 'something.'"

About that time, "Decorating the White House for Christmas" came on television.

Guess what they were doing? Pouring bushels of artificial snow over the 30-odd Christmas trees on display at the White House.

Jennifer and I looked at each other and, simultaneously, said, "Snow. It needs snow." Another trip to the store produced two bags of "snow" and one bag of glitter. It was the final touch, the *pièce de résistance*. At

1 a.m., we were done. The next day, it needed only dusting and vacuuming. Well, you and I both know, there was more than just that. But, it was little things, and by "showtime" she was ready.

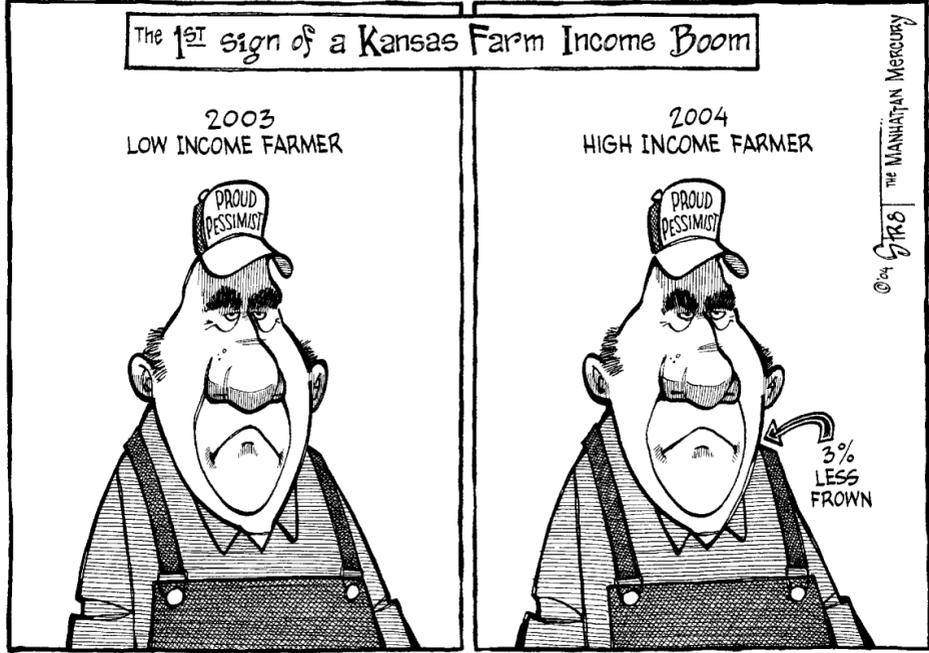
Except for one thing. We were in the car ready to leave and Jennifer couldn't find her keys. Obviously, they had been put out of sight in the last cleaning sweep. A spare set was found and all was well.

— ob —

Now, for the rest of the story. Everything went off without a hitch. About 100 women (I swear, not one man braved the tour) came through the house, and judging by all the positive comments, she passed with flying colors. Almost 10-year old Alexandria was the self-appointed guide for the upstairs, and she did a fine job.

Jennifer's dad and I were very proud of her and glad to be part of it. But, secretly, we hope she doesn't volunteer to be on the tour again for, oh, let's say another five years.

I don't think we have the stamina to do it again anytime sooner than that.



Just eating half really does work

As we head from one holiday to another, it's time to review my diet. I've finished 15 weeks of the "eat-just-half-of-it" diet and it's working pretty well. My plan was to lose a pound a week.

I started at 172 pounds, with a goal of getting down to 150. Then Steve, my ever-lovin' (I'll get him for this) husband, said that if I kept it up for a year at a pound a week, I could get back down to 120 pounds, just what I weighed when I got my driver's license at 16.

Ah, the lure of youth. I would love to be 120 pounds again. I haven't been 120 pounds since my freshman year in college.

There was another lure. Since I'm trying to lose weight, I tend to read anything about that subject.

Pick up any woman's magazine, and there will always be an article about losing weight.

The first one I found gave me a body mass index chart. The chart gives pounds on the top and height on the side. On the grid are numbers starting with 16, for those folks who are 6-foot, 6-inches tall and weigh 120 pounds, and go up to 60, for those who are 4-6 and weigh 250.

At 5-1.5 and 172 pounds, I was a 31. According to the chart, that's obese.

I hate that chart. After 15 weeks of dieting, I'm down to 153. That means I've lost 19 pounds, about 1.25 pounds a week.

I would have been down more, but while I didn't gain any weight



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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over Thanksgiving, I didn't lose any either.

According to the chart, I am now a 28 and am merely overweight.

I hate that chart. According to the chart if and when I get down to 120 pounds, I'll be a 23, and that is a healthy weight.

Whoopee, only 33 pounds and five numbers to go.

Actually, the diet has been pretty easy. I now eat half a bagel with half a glass of orange juice in the morning. At lunch and supper, I eat all my vegetables but only half the main course. I try to avoid potato chips, french fries, candy, snack crackers and desserts. This doesn't mean that I don't have an occasional bite of dessert, but I'm really firm on the potato chips. I love chips, and if I start, I won't stop.

I've always asked for a doggie bag at restaurants and eat the second half of my meal for lunch later in the week.

The biggest dangers to this diet are the buffet and the potluck. You always take too much at a buffet, and it's not considered good form to ask for a doggie bag. At a potluck, there

is sooooo much food and it all looks soooo good that you want to taste a little of everything, which loads your plate and expands your waist.

Thanksgiving wasn't too bad, but then I ate leftover potatoes, gravy and dressing for three more meals. Not good, according to "the chart."

I hate that chart — which is probably why I have it on my refrigerator door.

After I'm a 23, it goes on the dart board.

From the Bible

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; . . . To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. Luke 2: 1a, 3, 4a, 4b, 5

Reader feels townships needed

To the Editor:

In reference to your article Nov. 17, 2004, "Are townships things of the past?", you referred to a hot topic perhaps up north. Those of us down in the southeast corner of Decatur County (Allison Township) have never thought so. We need some kind of government body to represent us in the county courthouse, as we are in the county.

Your comment that we don't do much or spend much is wrong. We keep books and records, follow a budget, file all forms for the Kansas Security Fund, and we pay wages, insurance, etc. — the board wages. We are cheap workers.

We do have a contract with Decatur County's road department to maintain our roads, haul and gravel our roads. The cost of Allison Township owning and operating our own equipment was not feasible. To hire qualified and trained operators is nearly impossible, as it is not full-time employment.

Contracting or hiring the Decatur County road department has been

Letters to the Editor

very successful. An untrained operator can destroy both a road and equipment, which is added expense and accomplishes nothing. Weeds and grass need to be controlled with consideration of the environment, and prairie dogs also need to be controlled, to mention some duties.

Don't you think that a financial and budget report would be required and need to be published? Whatever type of government we had, don't you think that landowners paying taxes want to know how and where their tax dollars are spent, and where in the county it is going? Ask some of them.

The low or minimum-maintenance road signs do not mean that road is not going to be maintained. That road will be maintained as in the past. Low or minimum maintained road signs are for liability insurance for townships against law-

suits from drivers that don't realize they are not on the Interstate.

The transferring of law enforcement to larger units is good. Of course, transportation and modern equipment are very different from 50 years ago.

I have heard a discussion of a county unit combining townships, and no one wants on the board. At a meeting I simply asked if they didn't have a wife to take an office. One gentleman said, "Women don't think like men." My reply was, "Thank God."

I don't know why, but whatever your form of combining of governments, there is still a township board. Best we take care of us and let Sherman County manage there. Do you have a better idea?

Frances Bader
Allison Township trustee
Jennings

Salvation Army fills in the gaps

To the Editor:

The Salvation Army has a passion for meeting human needs, in your community and the entire state of Kansas. With the purpose of making God's love known to all people, the Salvation Army's objective is to help the "whole" person, to minister to spiritual as well as physical and social needs.

The Salvation Army service unit (also called "service extension") is composed of volunteers who know their home community.

Each unit makes local, regional and national services of the Salvation Army available in rural areas where the Army has no physical presence.

The program is flexible. Knowledgeable volunteers can meet needs quickly and in the most appropriate way.

Our program is designed to assess local needs, to fill gaps and to assist in emergency situations. We try not to duplicate services of other agencies, but in many cases, we work side-by-side with them to help people in need.

Service unit members are responsible for using money entrusted to them wisely and efficiently. They provide help to people during crisis situations. Emphasis is on building people's ability to solve problems (long-term solutions), not just providing services (short-term solutions).

All service units offer emergency crisis, including help with utilities, rent, clothing, food, prescriptions, eye glasses and transportation. During disasters, the units are on the scene of tornadoes, floods and fires, often spending days offering support to the victims and disaster workers as well.

The Salvation Army relies on the financial support of the community we are helping.

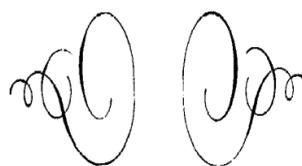
Donations raised in a particular town stay in that area and are used to provide emergency crisis assistance to its residents.

Individuals or businesses may contribute by dropping a donation in one of our red kettles this Christmas or sending a check to: The Salvation Army, Oberlin and Decatur County

Service Unit, Box 285, Oberlin, Kan., 67749. Donations may also be made by going to www.armykettle.com or calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY. These donations will be used in the communities where they were donated.

We look forward to continuing our work in Decatur County. We appreciate the volunteers and donors who help us change the lives of the people we serve.

May you have a wonderful Christmas and a blessed new year!
Michael J. Dixon
service extension director
The Salvation Army
Kansas and Western Missouri
Division
Kansas City, Mo.



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