

Right to inspect phones, computers controversial

A growing controversy centers on government agents asserting a right to inspect the contents of computers, cellular phones, music players and other electronic devices people — even Americans — bring into the country.

The Department of Homeland Security claims Customs and Border Protection agents can open and inspect anything that comes into the country, whether it's a box of pickles or a computer.

While the agency says it doesn't employ racial profiling, one American born in Pakistan claims his computer has been searched five times now. Most people are never stopped or questioned.

Customs officials says they don't need probable cause or a warrant the inspect travelers' computers. Few citizens are searched, however.

It's as if Americans check their constitutional rights when they leave the country. Police would need a warrant to search a computer in your home or even in your car, but Customs claims it's not the same at the border.

"You forgo your right to privacy when you are seeking admission into the country," said Russ Knocke, a spokesman for the department. "This is the kind of scrutiny the American public expects."

CNN quotes Knocke as saying Customs agents could inspect documents in a briefcase as well.

But privacy advocates see things differently.

Two groups, the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Asian Law Caucus, filed a suit in federal district court in San Francisco demanding to see how Customs agents determine whose computers to search. It accuses the agency of conducting "lengthy questioning and intrusive searches." The groups claim some devices have been seized and never returned.

"Plaintiffs seek agency records in order

to determine what policies and procedures exist governing questioning and searches of individuals at the nation's ports of entry," the suit says.

People don't expect their computers and phones to be open to inspection, though.

"Your laptop computer may contain your financial records, your e-mail with your friends and your family and your co-workers, records of the Web sites you visit, confidential business information," said Marcia Hoffman, an attorney for the foundation. "Our position is there should be some suspicion of wrongdoing before the government can search your sensitive personal information at the border."

Border Protection agents, with a glance and a question, have a way of making people returning home to America feel like criminals. They're trained to look for signs of illegal activity and guilty behavior. They ask questions and look for a reaction.

In recent years, Customs agents have been and questioned fewer and fewer people, apparently relying on profiling to pick their targets rather than chance. Legal, nonracial profiling.

Americans of foreign descent and visitors complain the searches and questioning agents do conduct can be unreasonable.

As a nation, we need to ask ourselves whether we want to welcome visitors or drive them away.

Should Americans, regardless of where they were born, be subject to this kind of search?

Do we really check our rights at the border when we go out of the country, or does the constitution cover us even during a Customs inspection?

What it all comes down to is, what kind of a country do we want to be? Free and open, or a police state?

We're rapidly moving from one to another in the name of Homeland Security.

— Steve Haynes



Finally, game that was super

At last, a Super Bowl that was better than the commercials.

Everyone knew the New England Patriots, undefeated in the regular season and playoffs, should win.

Everyone knew the Patriots were the better team, maybe the best in football history. All the experts and oddsmakers agreed.

Everyone, apparently, except for the underdog New York Giants, who kept playing when New England took the lead and did what had to be done to win.

Quarterback Eli Manning showed brilliance, especially on the final drive, when he escaped a collapsing pocket, broke away from two tacklers and passed for a first and 10 deep in enemy country.

It was Manning, not the Patriots, who looked invincible that Sunday.

Well, like they say, that's why they play the game.

It was a refreshing change from the last few years, when the hoopla over the television commercials far surpassed the action on the field.

This year, the commercials were the disappointment, mostly uninspired and less than interesting. Maybe the advertising writers were on strike along with the Hollywood script writers.

Long-time favorites such as Pepsi and Budweiser failed to field anything memorable, though the dog helping the Clydesdale who didn't make the cut with his training was cute.

No single spot compared to the



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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wacky humor of the Sierra Mist or Bud Light ads of the last couple of years. The "superpowers" ads were kinda dull.

Well, it's supposed to be about the game, right? Not the two weeks of extended interview and media hype?

Then there was New England coach Bill Belichick, proving himself once again to be about as poor a sport as can be found on the field today.

There was Belichick, making his way off the field with an escort of state troopers and security men while his assistants had to mount a final play that league officials insisted has to be run.

With one second left, everyone knew it didn't matter, but should the coach have been there?

Asked about it by Dave Letterman last week, quarterback Manning said, with a smile, "Maybe he was trying to beat traffic."

It's hard to see why the National Football League puts up with a guy like this Belichick, who's been accused now of spying on opponents' practices at least three times — and fined at least once.

Do sportsmanship, fair play and integrity add up to anything in pro sports these days?

If not, why do we care? Guess that's a question the NFL owners ought to be answering.

Sportswriters already are arguing that New England was the better team and New York just got lucky. That may be, but for a year at least, Eli Manning can strut around Manhattan like he owns the place.

Next fall, the Patriots will have a chance to redeem themselves.

Between now and then, we hope the league looks at Mr. Belichick's antics again. Mere fines won't have much impact, not considering what coaches make these days.

America has little tolerance for cheaters or poor sports.

And you have to hope the advertising agencies, copy writers and advertisers come up with something better than the insipid ideas they put out this year.

Americans need something to talk about the day after the big game other than what happens on the field.

Most years, anyway.

Can you top this car story?

Jim "fessed up" after last week's column, telling me about his own vehicle faux pas. It makes my getting in the wrong car look like kindergarten stuff.

Years ago, he said, when his children were young, he bought a long-body, multi-passenger vehicle. Can I say Suburban? Maybe not.

He hadn't owned it very long when he made a quick trip to the store. He got in to drive off and felt right away that something was amiss.

"Wait a minute!" he thought. "What's wrong? Somebody stole the steering wheel!"

He said he felt pretty sheepish when he realized he had crawled into the back seat.

Now, we're even.

-ob-

I finally gave in to temptation. I went to an auction Saturday.

And guess what I came home with? Four pint jars of buttons.

Anyone who knew my mother knows she was crazy about buttons. She had an entire room dedicated to her button collection.

When we sold her buttons at auction, a dealer said to me, "I've been to auctions where there might have



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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been better buttons, but I've never been to one with more."

Getting ready for the sale, I got a crash course in buttons and came to appreciate some of the different kinds. When I spotted those jars, I had to turn them over and over, inspecting the contents. Sure enough, I spotted some very collectible pieces.

There were a few "realistics," buttons that actually look like a thing, a woman's face, a hat, a kitten, a piece of wood. Mom used to call them "goofy buttons."

Another turn of the jar and I spotted a "paperweight." My heart beat a little faster, because I love paperweights. These are buttons that look like little paperweights. They are round and have a depth to them. Usually made in two pieces, they have a design that looks three-

dimensional.

There were also some "diminutives," which are exactly what they sound like — very small buttons. These were used on children's clothes or undergarments.

I'll never have the collection my mother did — don't even want one — but the hunt for interesting pieces is what makes collecting fun.

-ob-

Our two cats still can't decide if they are friend or foe.

When we introduced Missy to Sammy a few months ago, we hoped it would be love at first sight. Instead, it was instant animosity.

They've come a long way and now tolerate each other. At times, we think they're actually playing together. But, then one will get too personal and it's back to "pff-s-s-s-t-ing."

Weighing the odds with wheat

To the Editor:

In the game of then and now, a person could use our grain crop, wheat, as an example.

On Feb. 6, 2008, the price of wheat at Herndon's Decatur Co-op establishment was \$10.13. Is that a good thing or otherwise? With tractor fuel and gasoline at its present level, the answer is, who knows?

My father told me this story of the World War I era:

Wheat got up in price to \$3, a terrific price for that time. Farmers had no fuel bills, only hay for the horses to haul the wagons.

The unfortunate part was that railroad cars were in short supply and the grain elevators couldn't take more grain, as they were full. To sell a load, a farmer had to rely on the favor of the elevator manager when railroad cars were available.

My father beat the odds one time. It was a 2 1/2-mile haul to Herndon

and a 5 1/2-mile haul to Traer, where Waid Waldo's elevator was in business. By some mysterious way, my father managed to get a 60-bushel wagonload of wheat sold to Traer.

At that time or later, it was common knowledge that Waid Waldo was getting railroad cars when other elevators went begging for the same.

Mr. Waldo was well-acquainted with what it took to secure cars. Today, it is called, under-the-table money. Mr. Waldo would slip the train crew whatever it took — and presto, mission accomplished.

There were no grain-hauling trucks those days of 1918. Railroads had a stranglehold on the business.

The railroad is still in business as it was in 1918. It has changed

ownership, but in this era of diesel locomotives, 70-car trains were used in the 2008 harvest.

Having lived next to the railroad two miles east of Herndon for 85 years, the trains have been a big part of my life.

This past wheat harvest, to see a 70-car train slowly go up the valley west of Herndon was a thrill I can't put into words. How things change.

Anyway, when Mr. Waldo paid my father \$180 for a 60-bushel wagon load of wheat, he remarked, "Lorentz, that's a lot of money for a load of wheat."

Wonder what he would say now?

Karl Wendelin
Herndon

Letters to the Editor

Reader wants answers from city

To the Editor:

Where are our city council, mayor and administrator?

I have written a letter to each council member, along with the mayor and the administrator. It's apparent they are not concerned with what happens to certain people in Decatur County.

After waiting several months, I was in hopes that most of them would have responded to my letter explaining the problem I had with our chief of police. It was written out loud and clear and should have

been clearly understood.

Since then, I have contacted the administrator at The Gateway and he suggested I contact the city clerk in a nearby town. Really? This is not an intelligent response. He would never answer any of my letters — only converse on the phone telling me to contact the city clerk in this nearby town.

I recently called out city and county attorney, Steve Hirsch, and asked his advice. Mr. Hirsch advised I call the administrator back at The Gateway. Even though Steve

knew about me calling the city clerk in a neighboring town.

What would you call this kind of behavior? It surely is not normal. It is a runaround with these people and not meeting their responsibilities as council members.

Most of the ones on the council were not elected by the people. Some of the ones in the council put them in office, which I do not believe is right.

Elsie Wolters
Oberlin

Thanks to everyone for great Christmas

To the Editor

On behalf of The Salvation Army and all those we serve, we would like to take this opportunity to say "Thank you" to all your readers who helped make this another successful Christmas season.

We are grateful to the many service groups, churches, school groups, families and others who volunteered hours ringing the bells.

Also, a word of appreciation to those who donated to our red kettles or mailed in contributions.

Together, we are helping people in significant ways.

Because of the generosity throughout the community, neighbors in need are receiving assistance not just at Christmastime, but all through the year. Thank you again for playing such an important role in the work of the Salvation Army where you live.

If you are interested in donating or volunteering, call (800) 336-4547, extension 368, for information.

Brian Carroll

Service Extension Director
The Salvation Army, Kansas
and Western Missouri

From the Bible

Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations.

Psalm 134:13

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