

## Today's surveillance systems offer the opportunity for abuse

Supposedly, it's the next wave in school security and finance: electronic chips embedded in student IDs that allow officials to track where a student is every minute of the day while on campus.

The movement apparently started in Texas, where school budgets are based on average daily attendance, rather than a "count day" like in Kansas. A San Antonio-area district started with a middle school and a high school to test the system, justifying the expense by estimating it might recover \$1.7 million a year in state money.

And while it's always about the money, officials talked about being able to pinpoint students' locations, say, during a lock down, with ease. Or, presumably, while smoking in the boys room.

The Orwellian implications are obvious, but the first opposition came from an odd couple: the family of a girl who belong to a conservative Christian sect. They drew support from the liberal American Civil Liberties Union, which sued the district.

The girl's parents maintained that just having to wear the ID, chip or no chip, was against their religious beliefs and marked her as owing obedience to "a false god." The district offered to move her to another school, but the suit ensued.

The remarkable thing here is, given the religious objection, the district didn't just give in. The chip system has much broader implications, however. If a government (a school district) can force students to be tracked on campus, what would stop bigger governments (like states or Uncle Sam) from requiring similar chips in driver's licenses or, as one wag commented, just having them imbedded under our skin.

Like the school district, the benefits to the government would be many. School officials envisioned faster cafeterias where the chips would report who ate what, for instance. And similar radio-frequency responders already report movements of trucks and train. Why not drivers and cars?

Perhaps its inevitable, in a world where increasingly, everything we do is caught on camera or recorded somewhere in a computer. Or are we allowed to ask ourselves, is this the world we want to live in?

Someone will say, "What harm can come from being tracked if you're not doing anything wrong?"

The problem with that kind of thinking is that, for our own good, of course, government gets to define "wrong." Today, it might be terrorism. Tomorrow, voting for the other party.

If you don't believe that could happen, just recall President Nixon's desire to sic the Internal Revenue Service on those on his "enemies list," or the more recent flap about IRS mistreating conservative "tea party" groups.

And you probably don't believe the National Security Administration is tracking all our phone calls, either. Just to look for terrorists, of course. Or criminals. Or, some day, hooligans (meaning anyone the government doesn't like.)

Technology does offer great benefits, but any of surveillance system presents the opportunity for abuse. When everything is done in secrecy, it's hard to know when an agency has crossed the line. You just know it will happen.

Already we are tracked by our phones, recorded by the phone company, watched by the government. We need to talk about it, set some guidelines. And the nation needs to have this conversation now, before it's too late.

Chips in our arms may be the least of our worries.

— Steve Haynes



## It takes a village to raise a child

Hilary Clinton once said, "It takes a village to raise a child." And she is so right. That village may exist within a city, a church, a neighborhood or a school, but the responsibility for the children rests with us all.

I remember, as a kid, those adults in my life who held a special role. There were neighbor families, church friends, teachers and my friends' parents. I remember Derrell Keiswetter showing me the process of candling eggs; Ray Farewell calling me Carrie Mae and Thelma Boatman teaching me how to genuflect...properly.

When Jack and I moved from Reno, Nevada, to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, our children were 17, 15, 11, 6 and 4.

A few weeks after arriving, the older two came to the kitchen and said to me, "You know, we miss our friends, but who we really miss are our adult friends." These people had been part of the village helping to raise our children. Fortunately, before long, there were villagers who soon stepped up in Tuscaloosa too.

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



As I looked in the paper on Tuesday, I felt pride for our local village. Many individuals, teachers included, give up their weekends to mentor our children. Last weekend could have been titled, Focus on the Children. There was the Kids' Wrestling Tournament, a girls' gymnastic event, the "Pass It On" youth hunt at the State Park and a rock concert sponsored by the Church of God. Undoubtedly, there were other events.

These things do not happen because of kids; they take place because of adults who are willing to give of their time, their knowledge and skills. And that is no small sacrifice.

These youth activities benefit not just the young people and their parents, but older ones as well. They bring money to the community, and introduce them to this place we call home. These visiting families see an up to date hospital and clinic, well-tended schools and stadium; a golf course; a two screen theater; a library complex; and a new pool in the making. Such activities also introduce them to the people of our village.

Our town did not become what it is today without a great deal of involvement by dedicated people. People who have given not only countless hours, but personal dollars. One only has to look on the library or theater plaques to realize how the dedication of many working together met the needs of our village. As long as we continue this practice and dedicate ourselves to the betterment of our village, we will grow and prosper and so will our children. [mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net](mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net)

## Be strong, do not surrender

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



Our family Christmas celebration was eagerly anticipated. The birth of a child is the reason for Christmas and Christmas is always special when there is a child in our midst!

We all shopped carefully for Mo. I didn't wrap the gender neutral Jack-in-the-box, I had searched so hard to find. The caterpillar popping out seemed like excitement enough!

His Daddy operated it. Mo's eyes got big. He didn't laugh.

Okay, lots of presents, move on. Later we revisited the Jack-in-the-box. Mo wasn't exactly terrified by it but he wasn't happy either.

His parents decided to model a reaction for him. When the caterpillar jumped out they laughed and clapped. Mo was not impressed.

I wondered. His Auntie Kate, at the same age, loved her Jack-in-the-box. Was she exceptionally brave?

I will answer this: truly she was and is!

I do not mean she tempts fate, or breaks rules or constantly pushes the limits.

She has personal integrity, and an excellent moral compass. She sets goals. The risks she takes will harm only her if she falls short. When she fails; she is smart enough to accept the blame, take the lesson as learned and move on.

All our daughters are this way, but none more so than Kate. When I grow up I want to be just like her (except I'm not running any triathlons).

One time when I left the girls with my mother, Kate was almost 5. When I returned she had a ball of yarn, some

knitting needles and a little swatch of something which she proudly showed me.

"You taught her to knit?" I asked, incredulously?

Mom said, "No one teaches Kate anything!"

Meaning Kate was determined and perhaps a tad arrogant. (Wonder where she got that from?)She was going to do what she was going to do. You could offer direction or encouragement; but teach? No, more like get out of my way!

However she was always nice. She never had to trample other people to get what she wanted. She didn't have to defeat others to win!

How do we teach Mo to be like Kate? To be a MAN?

It might help if I clarify my definition of a "man".

I see it as a set of positive characteristics: gender neutral.

There is a word: ruth. It is not a word we use any more. Some of the meanings are pity, sorrow, grief and COM-PASSION.

A word we do use is ruthless: defined as showing no mercy.

We should tell our children every

day: BE STRONG. DO NOT SURRENDER.

We should show them ways to be courageous and victorious.

We should demonstrate how to win with ruth!

The morning after we opened our presents, I sat down with Mo and the Jack-in-the-box. I put his hand on the crank so perhaps he would feel some control of the situation. When the caterpillar popped, I put his hand on it. We pushed it back and let it spring forward, again and again.

"Be a man, Mo. Push back at the things that seem wrong."

We even made a fist and punched it a couple of times.

"See Mo, you are strong! You can fight!"

Mo is now quite intrigued with the Jack. He understands the crank makes it open but can't do it for himself. Instead he tries to open it manually; having ascertained where the little latch is that holds the top shut. It's the Hagman mechanical ability coming through!

Do I believe his acceptance of the toy is telling of his future? In some respects, I do.

What is most telling is how society has turned growing up and taking a leadership role into a negative thing.

The person who wrote the story saying the most harmful thing you can say to a child is "be a man" is as crippled by stereotypes as a grandma rejecting pink toys for little boys.

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