OUR EXPECTION OF PRIVACY

Has fallen to the lure of technology …

by Vic Berecz

There are still a few *hermits* who hide away from the world, usually because their paranoia has gotten the better of them. But, for virtually everyone else, privacy is a thing of the past. Technology has made all things visible and traceable. You really can't hide any more!

For example ... *EZ-Pass* keeps you out of the long lines at toll plazas and reduces the cost of collecting tolls. It also maintains a record of where you have been and when. And, toll collection is only one use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) transponder technology. Don't forget Exxon-Mobil's *SpeedPass* ... and there are a host of other applications developing.

Other examples ... Your credit card leaves a trail of where you are, how much money you spend, and what you buy. That's not unlike getting cash from an ATM. How about that GPS in your car ... it tells you how to get to your destination, and knows where you are every step of the way. And there's your car itself ... its on-board computers keep the car running well, help you and your mechanic maintain it, and also keeps a record of your driving habits. Have you ever looked at *Google Maps* on your computer? Check out the satellite view of your home from a laptop on your deck. Time it right and you can wave to yourself ... like you do at those ubiquitous security cameras!

And then there's your computer ... every e-mail you send and every website you visit creates a record and can tell somebody something about you. Needless to say, Internet shopping tells the vendors even more about you. Also, how about those photo-sharing websites, or *E-Vite* party invitations you use, or the *E-Cards* you send to save Christmas card postage, or the on-line Christmas lists you share? That last one especially tells the world an awful lot about you, your friends, and your tastes. The list goes on!

Finally there's the trail of uniquely identifiable information you leave everywhere you go ... that trail of DNA in flecks of skin, falling hair, and droplets of saliva.

These are some of the technologies we've become accustomed to, and come to depend upon. Remember, TV shows like *Criminal Minds*, *Numbers*, and *Bones* are simply fictionalized representations of the technology that's all around us. The choice has been made, we've given up privacy for better lives. But, why do we need and want privacy anyway?

I've always advocated posting salaries on the bulletin board. That's sort of like the situation with government employees. I believe that would make for more equitable pay. I can think of only two reasons why anyone would object: either they are slackers or tax-cheats.

Oh yeah, there's always the question of "need-to-know." Truly, most people don't really need to know all those details about us, and in fact could care less. Ask yourself why do we need to know all that crap about David Letterman, or Tiger Woods, or Mark Sanford? You say that entertainers, sports stars and politicians are public figures and therefore gave up their right to privacy. Well, I maintain that in this day and age we have all become public figures.

If you see yourself as a public figure with no expectation of privacy, maybe you'll act just a little nicer and thereby make the world a better place to live for all of us ...

… and that's a good thing.