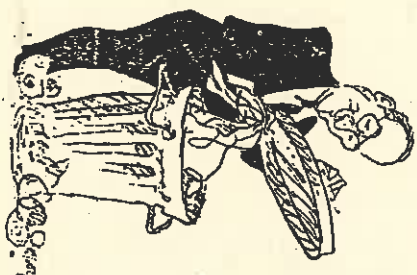


# Lives less private

More and more, high-tech means high profile

By Deni Elliott

**M**y I have the attention, please, of everyone who has the potential of gaining public recognition? May I have the attention of everyone who knows someone who may have the potential of gaining public recognition? Now, do I have everyone's attention?



Boys and girls, the rules of privacy have changed. Please do not believe that people will keep your dirty little secrets the way that they might have done for your parents. Those days are over and while it might be hard for some of us, ultimately it's good for the country. Now, I am not condemning the use of hidden cameras and microphones, but I am asking that all of us put forth a little effort to avoid becoming the Monica of tomorrow's media coverage. Technology has changed the privacy rules in two ways: It's easier than ever to secretly record somebody and we are more likely than ever to leave electronic traces of ourselves. Both have combined to make it less likely that skeletons will remain in the closet. And, ultimately, that's good for society.

Who doesn't have a micro cassette recorder or a way to record their telephone conversations? You can hook the technical ability necessary to set the clock on your VCR, and still be able to preserve high enough quality sound to shake a presidency. Whether the recording is made to protect the person receiving the message or to retain important information for later retrieval, people are recording one another in record numbers. It would be polite if they asked first, and may even be illegal if they don't.

Regardless, remember that everything you say may be examined in the light of day. The other new technological phenomenon is that we are knowingly leaving more electronic tracks than ever



before. Every provocative message left on voice-mail, every spontaneous e-mail remark might be preserved, along with every credit card, debit card and computer transaction. Uncomfortable at first, this level of undeniable presence is now commonplace for most of us. Only the most paranoid and least busy among us can take the time to cover up electronic footprints, block caller ID, eschew all bank cards and refuse to speak to an answering machine.

As a direct consequence of the tracks we leave, we are more accountable for our actions.

It's easy to deny when all that remains are the memories of those involved. It's impossible to deny the trail left by our preserved statements and actions. In fact, confronting this evil one can be humbling as we realize just how self-deceptive or distorted our memories can inadvertently be.

This new level of accountability, while

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sometimes uncomfortable for individuals, is good for society. Publicly alone does not make an action ethical, but public knowledge goes a long way in keeping people on the moral high ground. The possibility that an act may become public

knowledge provides a good test of whether behavior is questionable or whether it can be justified.

The lack of secrets is also good because it herds a return to a shared community. We can be horrified at the loss of ideal behavior of public officials only when we have nothing more than a carefully crafted public persona to examine.

When we have the chance to know our public officials as people we might know in our own neighborhood we have the opportunity to decide which personal traits of our leaders really matter to us, the voters. But within all of the silver linings in this new era of no secrets, there lies the cloud of inadvertent disclosure. Please remember: The rules have changed.

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