

## No Place to Hide

*By Liz Gibbons*

Technology has transformed our lives. Communication is easier and faster. Many tasks, such as shopping, bill paying, or sending gifts, can be performed with a few clicks. You can find information on any topic on the Internet and can take countless courses online. One of my neighbors is wheelchair bound. She has a Dodge minivan that has a ramp that slides out of the back, and she can wheel her motorized wheelchair into the van which has hand-operated controls. Due to technology she still can be pretty self-sufficient.

However, there is a sinister side to technology. A friend of mine sent an imaginary dialogue between a man ordering a pizza by phone and the pizzeria clerk. The business had been bought by Google. The clerk asked the customer if he wanted the usual. The customer asked, "Do you know me?" The clerk replied that the caller's ID accessed his last 12 orders which had been for extra cheese and pepperoni. The customer replied that that was what he wanted. The clerk then suggested instead that he top it with spinach, sundried tomatoes and ricotta cheese. The customer replied that he hated vegetables. The clerk said, "But your cholesterol is high." "How do you know?" the customer asked. The clerk replied that they had the results of his blood tests for the last five years, but his prescription purchases showed that he had not been taking his medication regularly. They went on for several more exchanges in this vein. The customer got so exasperated that he said he was going to move to an island that had no Google, Facebook, or Twitter and no internet, no cell phones, and no one to spy on him. The clerk said he understood but that the customer needed to renew his passport as it had expired five weeks ago. This was an imaginary interaction, but unfortunately it is too close to the truth.

How often have you researched an item on the Internet and within minutes see an ad on your computer for that item? Everything we do and say is being monitored including emails, Google searches, phone calls, credit card purchases, travel records, books purchased, posts on social media, parking receipts, and other actions. We are also being spied on in our own homes through smart TV's, smart appliances, and smart meters. All this information about us is compiled by the U.S. National Security Agency and Homeland Security and stored at the data collection center in Utah which cost \$1.5 billion to build and has been called "the greatest symbol of totalitarianism of all time." The center has the capacity to hold a yottabyte of information on every person on earth. So, what the heck is a yottabyte? It is a thousand zettabytes. That's not much help, is it? A yottabyte is the number 1 followed by 24 zeros. After all, they wouldn't want to shortchange anyone's file capacity, would they? We are told this scale of surveillance is necessary to stop terrorism. Oh really? This is only the excuse. It looks as if Orwell's predictions of surveillance and domination over others as presented in his novel, *1984*, is in full operation.