

OPINION PACKETS

Our VIEW

Web of deceit

Internet shoppers need to be wary of scams

With the rise of users on the Internet, more and more people are shopping at home. While it once seemed that QVC was destined to take over America's shopping habits, the Internet has rapidly become America's shopping center of choice. Consumers are going digital for dozens of reasons — convenience, accessibility and, most of all, the ability to get away from the crowds.

But every brave new world has a few brave new criminals.

Credit card companies are advertising about how easy it is to shop at home. They advertise how much time a person saves shopping at home, pointing out people can avoid the mall, avoid the lines and get what they want from a La-Z-Boy, while they sip a beer with one hand and peruse the wares with their mouse in the other.

Is it safe, though?

Internet crime has risen 24 percent, CNN's Web site reported Sunday. The criminals are out there — the question is how to avoid them and stay protected.

More often than not, the criminals aren't high-tech hijackers, commandeering credit card numbers by splicing into connections. They aren't digital code monkeys who can peel open encryption with their teeth. They aren't using their programming skills to find new ways to "acquire" money.

They're into the tactics of old.

Like those who commit mail order fraud, these criminals are people who are reliant on trust. They say they've got great deals. They say they've got hot items. Send them a check, they say. Trust them, they say.

It's also the last thing they say before they vanish into the ether of the Internet.

All it takes to stay safe on the Internet is a little common sense. Don't send checks to unreliable sources, especially P.O. boxes. While a lot of legitimate Internet businesses work out of P.O. boxes, they are also the most common place to get short-changed. Sending credit card numbers through the Web should be done only through encrypted sources. They aren't impossible to break, but they're better than nothing.

In the end, it's a simply question of reason. Any deal that sounds too good to be true usually is, whether it be by mail or by Web. Better to be cautious than to be taken.

Mook's VIEW



Looking back

True history learned by study of all viewpoints



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Never forget that we are here today because of our ancestors.

Some of our ancestors lived here for hundreds, maybe thousands, of years before any other human had walked these plains. These ancestors were virtually annihilated by many later-generation European Americans.

The Anglo-Americans destroyed the buffalo, decimated the multitudes of different tribal societies and forced the remaining few to abandon their heritage.

Many of the later-generation European Americans also harnessed the blood and sweat of enslaved races of people. The African Americans, Mexican and Latino Americans and the Asian Americans built up, excavated and sustained the agricultural and industrial machine of the United States over the last 150 years.

Other ancestors continued to arrive for one reason or another over the past 100 years, and now we have all of us.

Colonization, genocide and slavery aren't unique to this country — they have happened many times in many different countries during many different decades, some more recent than others.

But this column isn't about colonization, genocide or slavery specifically — rather, it is about understanding and respecting the past, so that progress can be made in the present for the future.

Many times, the topics of the past are brought up only to explain when and where something happened, but few times do we understand why or how historical events happened and how they were perceived by the losers.

Much of the secondary educational system in the United States seems to concern itself with covering up the truth of the past by socializing youths under a blanket of "democratic" pride and Anglo-national heritage.

I find much more pride and

national heritage in knowing that the inhabitants of this country have a bigger variety of ethnic, religious and traditional backgrounds than anywhere in the world.

However, I think the overwhelming differences force many in power to perpetuate the "melting pot" mentality, without really examining critical times in the history of this land. And this can lead to severe problems.

Usually a thorough history is not obtained in part because winners write history, and the losers' perspectives are lost. Another reason is that by evading the depth of certain issues, it is easy to pacify the masses without stepping on any toes or instigating any uprising in historically marginalized groups of people.

Well, times have changed, and the past must become a useful tool for those who are forging a future. Only a thorough understanding of past histories can allow individuals to reckon with past activities and pursue a better future.

For example, the Germany of today is much different than the Nazi Germany that threatened Europe with military takeover and exterminated almost an entire ethnic population. One reason is because Germany was completely bombed into rubble, and the elders still remember those incredibly horrible times.

Another reason is that the youths spend two full years studying the dynamics that created the second world war, the society before and during Nazi Germany, the extremely terrible events that took place during the war and the rebuilding afterward.

We need to recognize and understand the good and the bad of our national history as well, so that it may be reconciled and progress. I believe that many of today's problems are a carryover from improperly reconciling past events.

For example, we need to understand the American Indian societies and destruction of them and why, to this day, reservations are impoverished with a variety of social problems such as alcoholism and illiteracy.

We need to understand the slave trade, "liberation" of Africans in the United States, the civil rights movement and why members of the black population are still impoverished by poverty, discrimination, violence and ill health.

We need to understand the social movements of the 1960s and the key figures who preached nonviolence and understanding but nevertheless were

systematically assassinated. We need to know why we still haven't learned the truth about those assassinations.

There are ways to break the barriers of past ignorance and pursue a better future. The most important issue is that the schools and all individuals must internalize the truths and situations in our history. We also must understand the many other viewpoints than the Anglo-American.

Another important way we can dismantle some of the barriers we find with rectifying the past is by participating in cross-cultural events that bring a better understanding through experience. Such opportunities as living in other countries or enjoying festivals like the UNITE Pow-Wow very effectively destroy stereotypes and develop appreciation.

While I became incredibly enlightened about certain American Indian traditions at the powwow, I was completely disappointed that, in a university that has almost 20,000 individuals within its community, there were maybe only 50 people present who weren't of Native American descent.

Does this fact represent a general disinterest and apathy by the majority of Lincoln's "academic" community? Or does it perhaps express a fear of the unknown and a misunderstanding by individuals who had no part in creating a history that they can not reconcile, but can do something about the present?

Reality is sometimes a difficult pill to swallow, but it is far more important to take the medicine than to let the wounds continue to fester, becoming increasingly swollen and irritated.

The past is not something to forget, ever. Past situations need to be respected for what they were and the circumstances that surrounded them. Then situations can be understood and properly rectified, so that the future does not drown in a sea of discontent, misunderstanding, ignorance, prejudice inequality and injustice.

Apologies are a token, not a symbol.

The great spirit is within us all, for we are the living descendants and society of all of our ancestors. Let us learn deeply from the histories of humanity, so that we may use these useful keys and open the doors to the nation's pillar of strength.

There we will find that prosperity and equality for the future are embedded in understanding what has already happened.

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