Article Side

Have Apple and Foursquare Aps Spawned new P.I. Tactics? by Robert King

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Kashmir Hill, a Forbes staff writer, has a pretty interesting article about the iPhone â€œFind My Friendsâ€™ and Foursquareâ€™s Radar aps and whether or not they could just be the next best thing to hiring a private investigator to check up on suspected cheating wives or husbands.

â€œWelcome to The Not-So Private Parts where technology & privacy collide.â€• Thatâ€™s the kicker (headline follower) to Kashmir Hillâ€™s pretty intriguing article about the iPhone â€œFind My Friendsâ€• a Foursquareâ€™s Radar aps.

Can Simple technological tools turn us all into private investigators? Kashmir asks. Hereâ€™s the story.

Welcome to iCheers, where everybody knows your whereabouts. Both Apple and Foursquare are offering new tools for iOS5 that will let us know where our friends are at all times. The iPhoneâ€™s â€˜Find My Friendsâ€˜ feature is pervasive tracking of any of your friends (who opt-in), whereas Foursquareâ€™s Radar simply lets you know anytime a friend (who has opted in) comes into your vicinity, whether you have the Foursquare app running or not. You used to need a private investigator to keep track of people this closely. Now you can just install the â€˜Find My Friendsâ€™ app on your wifeâ€™s new iPh 4s without her knowledge and see if she goes where she said she was going to go on a Saturday night. Thatâ€™s what one Machead claims to have done this weekend, and now heâ€™s planning to file f a divorce.

Late Saturday night, â€œThomasMetzâ€• posted to MacRumors (via 9to5Mac) about how he turned his wifeâ€™s iPhone into a spyPhone:

I got my wife a new 4s and loaded up find my friends without her knowing. She told me she was at her friends house in the east village. Iâ€™ve had suspicions about her meeting this guy who live [sic] uptown. Lo and behold, Find my Friends has her right there.

via Divorcing wife. Thanks iPhone 4s and Find My Friends â€“ MacRumors Forums.

This could well be a hoax, Kashmir writes, â€œthough the cuckolded spouse did post screenshots of his conversation with his wife as proof:â€•

For non-New Yorkers, she explains, the â€œmeat packingâ€• is not a reference to what she might have been doing on the Upper East Side, but â€œis the name for a neighborhood much farther south and west where pretty people go to drink, dance, and look pretty.â€•

It speaks to our culture of over-sharing that this guy would want to post his pain to a message forum, where it had the potential to go viral. But there were some voices of reason there, such as the person who wrote:

â€œYou should have divorced before you felt it necessary to spy. Good luck with the next one. Take some time before getting into anything.

By the way. It will mean nothing in court. Lying is proved. Cheating is not. Iâ€™m sure thereâ€™s an app f that.â€• Ouchâ€¦

Hill reminds us that, in case we are worried about this guy getting into legal trouble for spying on his wife, we need to view a recent case where, in New Jersey, a judge found that it was okay for a wife

to surreptitiously put a GPS tracker on her husbandâ€™s car (again to check for extramarital activities). â€œThe judge ruled that, because she jointly owned the car, she had the right to install the tracker,â€• Hill writes.

However, as Hill points out, the judge also said that it did not violate the cheating husbandâ€™s right to privacy because he was only being tracked on public streets where the car (and he) were in public view. The fact that a phone goes into a household, out of public view, may make this kind of tracking a bit more legally complicated.

Regardless, says Hill, â€œitâ€™s fairly amazing that within a week of the feature being released, itâ€™s a allegedly been used this way. â€œ I wonder how technologies that allow us to perform near-constant location-surveillance of our friends will transform how we operate.â€•

Just as the baby expects a magazine page to be interactive, will we start expecting our friends to be part of our location ecosystem? Will being given technology tools that make law-enforcement-style surveillance so easy a baby could do it transform us (more than Facebook already has) into a society of spies? Just as we expect everyone to have a Facebook account, perhaps weâ€™ll start expecting everyone to volunteer their whereabouts at all times, as part of the â€œsocial OS.â€• If a friend (or a spouse) chooses NOT to be tracked, will we assume they are up to no good?

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