

## Government Privacy

I recently had to telephone a government department to ask a question. It was not an easy task. If you ever have to phone the government with a question here is the type of response that you can expect. First, you must answer about 32 digitized questions by pressing the required button on your telephone. After about 20 minutes and 20 recorded announcements assuring you that they will be with you in a moment a voice comes over the line. The conversation shows how the Privacy Act has got way out of hand. The following is a true conversation that I had. Only the last 2 answers fall into the realm of hyperbole. The end result was as stated.

**Government clerk:** "This is Guramajunga. How may I be helping you?"

**Caller:** "I have a question regarding the Old Age Security Plan"

"Certainly sir. It will be my pleasure to assist you in this endeavour.

First, let me ask you a couple of questions. I must be sure that you are the person to whom I am speaking.

What might your name be?"

"John Smith"

"May I ask sir, how you would be spelling that?"

I spelled it.

"What is your social insurance number?"

gave my number

"Thank you for apprising me of that important information.

What is your address?"

gave my address

"What was your date of birth?"

gave it

"What is your wife's name?"

gave it

"Could I have your drivers licence number?"

gave it

"What is your health card number?"

gave it

"What is the name of your dog?"

"My dog's name was Riley, but he died several years ago".

"That's right sir. April, 2007 to be exact. I see that you also had a budgie bird that died the year before. You don't seem to have much luck with pets".

"What was the date of your wedding?"

gave it.

"It was a lovely wedding sir, rather small though with only 40 guests."

"Are all these questions completely necessary?"

"Oh yes sir. The privacy act you know.  
Now what is your question, sir?"

"I would like to know at what age the Old Age Security payments begin."

"Oh, I'm sorry sir, I can't answer that question. That's another department.  
I suggest that you call back and ask for section 48769362-6  
Thank you for calling and you have yourself a nice day."



**Brad McInnes**  
YMASC President 1970 - 1971

