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You're busted

Business is booming for detectives who specialize in catching cheaters

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Chicago private detective Michael Adelstein sits in his maroon minivan for hours in the pre-dawn cold, lying in wait outside a north suburban home to see if the woman inside gets a male visitor while her husband is at work.

Adelstein, who over six days has clocked almost 40 hours on the case, said he's seen nothing fishy so far, but his client, the woman's husband, is convinced his wife is cheating.

So Adelstein will return for at least one more stakeout, unable to run the van's heat for long in order to keep the car inconspicuous. Eyes glued to the home, a queen-size blanket at the ready, he'll listen to talk radio until daylight. And, unable to leave the car for fear of missing a crucial moment, he'll find relief in a Gatorade bottle when nature calls.

"For all the time that you spend doing that surveillance, you might get 15 seconds that you can use," Adelstein said as he described how he's working his most recent case of suspected adultery.

When it comes to catching a cheater, hiring a private eye to do some old-fashioned surveillance is as popular as ever. But the industry has changed in recent years, with new technology simultaneously giving philanderers more opportunity to stray and suspicious spouses more ammunition to snare them.

Adelstein has an army of tracking gadgets at his disposal—hidden and wireless cameras, GPS systems—all searching for the "gotcha" moment he can take back to his clients.

Not all clients who see the "proof" break off their relationships, but there's plenty of indication people want to know what their partners are up to.

At Spy Chest, an online spyware store based in Florida, sales of GPS tracking devices have climbed 500 percent this year due in part to people wanting to ensure their spouses are headed to the grocery store and not a lover's motel room, said company President Pat Palmer.

He credited the sales spike to more awareness of the technology and lower prices (from \$260 for a device that logs the car's whereabouts for later viewing, to upwards of \$500—plus a monthly fee—for a system that allows you to watch the car's movements in real time).

U-Spy Store in Lakeview gets several customers a day hoping to catch infidelity, and most turn to CheckMate, a semen detection kit that sells for about \$50, said store manager Orvil Flores.

Also popular is Spector Pro, a \$150 software program that records every action and keystroke on a computer, including any illicit e-mails a cheater is so careful to delete, Flores said.

But while technology can be a jilted spouse's best friend, it also can be a nasty enemy. Web sites like ashleymadison.com specialize in arranging romantic rendezvous for "attached" adults, and alibinetwork.com provides customized alibis and excuses to help players hide their affairs.

Internet dating also is sparking more cheating concerns, said Tony DeLorenzo, senior consultant with Detroit-

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based All State Investigations, a national private detective agency specializing in infidelity cases. His agency gets up to 300 Internet dating cases a year, typically when a woman in an online relationship with a man in a different state wants to ensure her new boyfriend's single before they meet in person.

Despite the changes in the industry, detectives say the most important part of their work remains the same: good surveillance.

Chicago's Adelstein, who runs Illinois Investigative Agency Inc. and charges between \$85 and \$100 per hour for his services, said he trains a small video camera on his subjects while he trails them around the city, recording their stolen kisses to later show as evidence to his client.

Sometimes Adelstein "plays tourist" to deflect attention from his camera, but if he needs a lower profile, he pushes a pinhole lens through a tiny hole he's poked in his camera bag, recording everything while the camera itself is out of sight. The small lens also can be disguised as a shirt button, he said.

It's legal to video someone in the public domain, but audio recording of conversations—on the phone or in person—is illegal in Illinois unless all parties are aware of the recording.

Remaining discreet is one of the hardest parts of the job, Adelstein said, adding, "Your heart pounds, because there's a risk that you get caught."

Keeping track of a subject's movements can sometimes be difficult as well, particularly in a city like Chicago where detectives can lose targets in traffic, big buildings and on public transportation.

Private detective Rob Johnson of Detroit-based Advanced Surveillance Group said he recently worked a case on a man in downtown Chicago that required three agents—two on foot, one in a car—to make sure they caught him leaving his office.

"He can take any number of trains, any time; there are multiple exits from the building," Johnson said. "We're not law enforcement so we don't have any special privileges."

As happens in so many cases, the detectives discovered the man was indeed cheating on his wife. Being the bearer of such heartbreaking news can be difficult, but detectives say that normally people who have resorted to hiring a detective are prepared.

"Some of them are even happy because they've been told they're crazy for the last couple of years," said private detective Adam Campbell of Chicago-based Heritage Investigations. While detectives say nothing beats the human touch, they are incorporating new technology to enhance their services.

All State Investigations plans to launch infidelity.com the first week of January to help people deal with the challenges of confronting and dealing with an unfaithful partner, DeLorenzo said. The site will have advice from therapists, chat rooms, blogs and discussion forums, he said. Campbell said he is working on a demo of a camera that could be installed in the dashboard of a car and controlled remotely.

Still, Campbell said, "as much as technology has changed, [the business] is still the same. You're still dealing with people's hearts."

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