

RE: Will the real hacker please stand up and raise their hand

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*Source:* <http://www.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/securityfocus/pen-test/2006-07/msg00126.html>

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- *From:* "Williamson, Clyde" <[CWilliamson@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:CWilliamson@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Thu, 13 Jul 2006 13:07:59 -0400
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I think perhaps fantasy characters, heroes and protagonists often embody, not a reality, but an ideal. John Wayne's characters, in most movies acted like heroes from other mythologies. People in the Middle Ages didn't act like the Knights of The Round Table. The ideals of Chivalry came from poets, not real life. I am not at all sure that there was ever a time when most Americans acted like a character out of a John Wayne movie. Instead, I think that it was entertainment because it was a wonderful story, not a real life documentary. If I recall correctly, Mr. Abagnale served time for his criminal actions. I believe that in France he nearly died in prison and he was sentenced to another 12 years in the states. His employment for the government was part of a release program (IIRC) and he was not paid for his work. After serving his time, he was released and offered his expertise to banks, which they took him up on. Instead of glorifying a criminal, the banks were making use of a reformed fraudster.

As for his friends... if they were unable to successfully hack in their younger years, and can't seem to find a decent job in the computer world now, I might question their skills, rather than some loss of ethics by business owners.

It seems to me that, perhaps, he has confused reality and fantasy. That can be a hard come down for anyone.

-----Original Message-----

From: Mark Teicher [<mailto:mht3@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>]  
Sent: Thursday, July 13, 2006 8:23 AM  
To: pen-test@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
Subject: Will the real hacker please stand up and raise their hand

Every once in a while, I read a story on the Internet, that just doesn't add up, as listed below, it appears most organization, enterprise type companies have policies preventing the hiring of known or identified computer security type people, other companies hire them openly or make up some impressive press statements stating they have hired one with rootfu or some sort of skillz, whatever they might be..

You be the judge after the reading the attached article..

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----- Original Message -----

Subject: [ISN] Hackers and Employment

Date: Thu, 13 Jul 2006 03:15:11 -0500 (CDT)

From: InfoSec News <alerts@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>

Organization: InfoSec News - <http://www.infosecnews.org/>

To: isn@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

<http://www.line56.com/articles/default.asp?ArticleID=7766>

By Demir Barlas

Line56

July 12, 2006

The reason many of us who grew up outside America found this country charming and worthy of emulation was its principles, at least as projected on the movie screen. You can argue about their politics, but the characters portrayed by John Wayne, for instance, operated according to a fixed code of ethics. They stood for what they considered right; they never cheapened or sold themselves; and they lived (and died) with integrity.

I encountered this America before I actually came here.

Perhaps this is why it is so easy for me to see what native-born Americans cannot understand about that their own country: that it is rapidly falling into decadence. When I say this, I'm not referring to some declining standard of collective religious morality, but rather to personal morality. All too many Americans stand ready to pimp themselves, and the system is now designed to reward rather than discourage them. This is an arrangement that the rest of the world rightly considers hypocritical and, despite all talk of globalism, will never emulate.

Let me give an example. I recently got an e-mail from Avaya, one of whose employees, Tom Porter, was leading a security team at the World Cup. The e-mail proudly advertises Porter as a "a former hacker [who] got into the U.S. government database on Roswell in the early 90s." Now he has been able to have a highly visible and well-paying job as chief of Internet security for FIFA and Avaya.

As soon as I got this e-mail, I recalled the case of Frank Abagnale, Jr., the fraudster whose life was made into the movie Catch Me If You Can.

And, I admit, I got angry. I want to tell you why.

Some of my friends in the ninth grade were aspiring computer hackers. I suppose it was a natural impulse for a bunch of intelligent boys cooped up in an otherwise boring programming class. We tried a few exploits but, in the end, got caught. We were never that good in the first place, not because we lacked intelligence but because, I am convinced, of the ethos that had survived into Denver even into the 1980s. The ethos told us that hacking was bad. We couldn't shrug this off our conscience, and so conducted our exploits rather half-heartedly.

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I've kept up with many of my classmates over the years. There is, in the group with which I am familiar, no one who has committed a felony, gone to jail, or refused to pay taxes. Everyone has walked the line. And our reward? Most of us struggle along at meaningless occupations, trying to make ends meet — punished, I maintain, by our consciences.

For America no longer rewards conscience. If you kill someone, you will be offered a book deal. If you impersonate a doctor and nearly cause the death of a baby [like Abagnale], someone will make a comedic movie about you. If you become a hacker and endanger our government, you will become a consultant. If you sink a company, you will find a high position in that very government. Only competence at criminality and self-promotion are rewarded. The more vicious, heartless, and inept you are, the further you'll go.

If you want to talk about anti-Americanism, you can't find a better example. The culture of merit, sincerity, and principle that once animated this country is gone, and that impacts everyone from left to right.

Have you seen *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*? John Wayne's character refuses to take the credit for an act that would, in that day and age, have made him famous. His principles dictate that he cannot engage in self-promotion, which he leaves to Jimmy Stewart's character. Stewart becomes a senator and marries a woman with whom Wayne was in love; Wayne retires from public life and dies alone.

Oh, but today! After shooting Valance, Wayne would have gotten a publicity agent, launched a blog, and gone on talk shows. He would have done the lecture circuit, opened a consultancy on how to shoot outlaws, and sold his "life rights" to a Hollywood studio.

I'm sorry to say it, but I hate what you might call the post-Wayne America (and I say this despite having radically different politics from Wayne himself). It's an upside-down country in which criminals become celebrities while good, hard-working people struggle along on dollars a day. There is no longer any act divorced from its promotion. The only principle is to gather as much money and fame as possible, prostituting yourself all the way, until you die.

I do not feel that a country can long endure such principles or such acts of decadence. They constitute a kind of rot that will, some day, turn America into the equivalent of the moribund, cynical countries of Western Europe. Moreover, they are a gleeful betrayal of every principle on which this country stood for the first two centuries of its existence.

I suppose this article will be met by incomprehension from people who have absorbed their values from the post-Wayne moment in American history. As a historian, I am a professional pessimist, but I can't help but feel that these very people are only the tip of the iceberg; that, as in the movie *15 Minutes* (or, more apocalyptically, *Death Race 2000*), crime will pay even

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more than it does today.

It is worth concluding with a passage from Henry Miller's *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, which captures the spirit of the changed America to which I allude:

As to whether I have been deceived, disillusioned...The answer is yes, I suppose. I had the misfortune to be nourished by the dreams and visions of great Americans. Some other breed of man has won out. The world which is in the making fills me with dread...It is a world cluttered with useless objects which men and women, in order to be exploited and degraded, are taught to regard as useful...Whatever does not lend itself to being bought and sold...is debarred. In this world the poet is anathema, the thinker a fool, and the man of vision a criminal.

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