

## Intruder Alert – Safe Computing Practices: Creating a Safer Infrastructure

By Burt Tschache

In my many years spent in the high tech and information processing professions, one of the functions I enjoyed the most was explaining how something highly technical works, in the common tongue. Computers are mysterious enough without having a complete language with acronyms constructed as a moat around a castle.

What I will explain in this column, using as much of the common tongue as possible, is how a network functions, any network. How does your information get from point A to point B (or even further)? The process is not really that mysterious. Everything on a network moves in the form of a Packet. The Packet is the basic electronic physical construct that moves throughout cyberspace carrying the bits and pieces of your information.

The Packet has essentially three sections: the header, the data and the trailer. The header and trailer are like the To and From fields on an envelope. The data is your information in convenient chunks. The header and trailer also contain information about how to reassemble the information once it reaches its destination, as most times information does not come to

you in a straight line. There are innumerable ways that Packets can get lost in their journey, so they are re-sent by the sender without you even having to do a thing about it.

The header and trailer also contain security information to make sure that no one intercepts your packet and messes with it. This has worked well within a wired network environment. Unfortunately, in the wireless environment, there are those individuals and institutions that have discovered the ability to intercept your packets. Your wireless will just send replacement Packets for the missing ones. This is how hackers are able to get your personal information from your wireless computer or cell phone. Some even have the ability to change Packets without changing the header and trailer. This is what security technicians in the wireless environments are working diligently at repairing.

As more and more information processing is done in a wireless environment, it is important for us, as the user community, to keep aware of our surroundings. When using a wireless computer or a cell phone, take a quick check of your environment to make sure that there are not suspicious individuals using suspicious equipment about. We all have different ideas of what that may entail, but I leave it to the individual to make

their own assessment of the situation. Cell phones are extremely vulnerable when used in a car. Besides the dangerous distraction factor, there are mobile units about just looking to hack someone's cell signal, and the hacked person will never know.

When using any wireless equipment at home, make sure that you use non-breakable keys and passwords on your wireless router. Use the strongest security level that your systems will handle and still function at a reasonable level. Once you have established connectivity with your wireless router, you can turn off the SSID or ESSID broadcast function on the router. If people can't see you, they can't hack you, or at least it adds another level of difficulty to the process. You may even want to consider encryption of your data if it is of a highly sensitive nature.

The more secure your computing environment is, the more secure your Packets of information will be. You want to give your Packets the best possible start on life, just like your children.

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## Meet Bob Young (continued from page 1)

so I stepped in and started to do what needed to be done. So I learned a lot about what an administrator does. Then we hired an administrator, who left after two years. So again I filled in as the Administrator while I was also the Mayor. And I also took a number of courses that the University of Washington offered on Public Administration for public officials, and that got me into the university system. I was Mayor for two terms-- eight years-- and as I was finishing my last year, they asked me if I would be interested in getting my Masters in Public Administration, and I thought that sounded interesting. So when I finished my term as Mayor, I went and got my Masters, which I finished last December. And then I started to apply to cities for positions as a City Administrator.

**VV: You have three weeks under your belt here. Are there things you've seen that you're excited about working on?**

**BY:** Yes. You have your Bicycle Skills Park that is moving ahead. And I think that eventually a Skate Park for young people will be good. I built a skate park in our last city, and it becomes a focal point for youth, if you put it where people can watch it. We're moving ahead with the new wastewater and stormwater plans. You've had two floods here--so helping be prepared to handle the next one, or any kind of emergency is a priorities. I have some emergency preparation background, that has been one of my interests. New schools-- that's going to be an exciting thing for the city-- putting a new school together. What an opportunity! And then the change on Bridge Street when the old schools go away and what we do with that, how we change the look of Vernonia on the main street is important. Economic development on our main street, what we can do to encourage that is also very important. I think those are all positives that I am looking forward to working on.

**VV: Have you ever been involved in any new school construction projects previously in your career?**

**BY:** Yes, we built a brand new high school in Bonney Lake. As part of the growth and expansion of Bonney Lake, we built a new high school, junior high and two grade schools. So we went through the siting, the permitting, the oversight and the occupancy for new schools as well as a bus barn and maintenance facility. So I worked with the superintendent, the school board, the construction engineer-- I was part of that all the way through to occupancy.

**VV: Any big concerns, red flags or surprises that you've come across since you've been on the job? Anything you see that you want to change or start doing differently?**

**BY:** No, no surprises to this point. It's what I thought I would find. I guess the surprise is how many people

are involved in the rebuilding process. All the different committees. I was told there were a lot, but to actually see them in action and to be part of it, that is quite a delight to find. You have a community who are part of the process.

Something I would like to change-- in talking to people, this is a city that is in recovery, there are construction projects going on everywhere. But one of the things that I want to see if we can't help is the appearance of our city, help people be proud of their community. This is a city that has been through a lot, and I can understand people struggling with it. But I see life coming back, so I want to see what we can do to improve the image and look of Vernonia. I'm not sure yet how to go about that, but I would like to somehow be a catalyst for it.

**VV: Why did you chose a small place like Vernonia?**

**BY:** My wife and I wanted a community where we could make a difference, be part of a team, and it didn't matter the size. I've lived in small communities before, where I was very involved in the community itself. We like to be involved in the community. I'm not an isolationist. I'll go to committee meetings and get out there and be part of the community. If we're going to lead the community, then we should be involved. And hopefully we can bring some encouragement and direction and hopefully have a positive impact.

**VV: What do you do in your spare time?**

**BY:** My wife and I like to ride bikes-- we ride recumbent bikes, so we'll be exploring out on the trails around here. I am restoring my second cabin cruiser, a twenty-eight foot Carver-- it's a big boat. We just had the motors running last week for the first time, and we're hoping to get it in the water soon. I'm hoping someone around here can teach me how to fish, since we are living right on

the river. Computers are also an interest of mine.

**VV: Anything else you would like to say to our readers?**

**BY:** I would like to say that the previous Interim Administrator, Jim Johnson, did this city an incredible service. Everything I have seen about Jim has impressed me, and I am in debt to him. He laid the groundwork for me. And, because with all the things we have going on, I'm glad that he has stayed on with a personal contract to help.

I also want to let people know, I'm here to be part of the community. I'm part of Vernonia now.

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