

*from Mac Central*

## ***Opinion: Straight Talk on Mac Security Risks***

*by Rebecca Freed*

Are Macs impervious to malicious software? No. Have Macs been the subject of catastrophic attacks? No again. Should Mac users be vigilant anyway? Of course.

It's time for me to fess up: I've been as complacent as most Mac users when it comes to taking precautions to safeguard my data and the integrity of my system. Although my Windows PC is swaddled in antivirus, anti-spyware, and firewall software, my Mac has been fairly undefended, up to now. I just haven't felt much urgency to put up barriers against threats that don't seem to exist.

But at Macworld Expo last month, I stopped by the booths of several security software vendors and began to wonder if they are pushing products people don't need, or if they know something I don't. After all, Mac users are just as vulnerable as anyone to the social engineering used by many computer exploits to install themselves. (While Mac fanatics will insist that they're more sophisticated than the Wintel rabble, there are plenty of innocents in Apple-land as well.)

### **Justifiable confidence?**

The complacency about Mac security has some basis in fact: OS X comes with many of the ports that could allow snooping closed; you have to change a System Preference to activate file sharing, personal Web hosting, or even printer sharing. If you don't use these features, you're protected by default. If you want to give other users access to some areas of your system, you should turn on the firewall that's built into OS X. The firewall is in the same System Preference window as the sharing services, and it lets you close all ports except those for services you want to allow. The firewall has some advanced features, including activity logging and a stealth mode. If enabled, the stealth mode makes your Mac invisible to incoming data inquiries, which is essentially the same thing that hardware firewalls do. If your home network includes a router with a built-in firewall, it probably gives you the same kind of protection.

Turning on OS X's firewall is a no-brainer, but finding it isn't. I looked for this control under the Security heading — but instead you need to double-click the System Preferences icon in the Dock, then double-click the Sharing icon in the Internet & Network section.

The Security preference in the Personal section deals with managing passwords for account access and FileVault, OS X's built-in encryption capability. I think

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## ***Con't from Page 1, Mac Security***

FileVault is a great idea, but it's something of a blunt instrument. I would like the ability to encrypt just some folders, not all of my hard drive. And as someone who regularly forgets passwords, I'm scared of the possibility that I could irretrievably lock up the contents of my hard drive.

Another reason that Mac users tend not to worry about exploits is that Apple tends to patch discovered vulnerabilities quickly. In 2005 Apple issued nine security updates as well as product updates incorporating security patches. These patches addressed exploits that were theoretical; as with most Windows vulnerabilities, no one had used the security holes to create a worm or virus and release it into the wild.

For example, last May an independent developer revealed a proof-of-concept exploit in a Dashboard widget, but no malicious activities were reported as a result of the security hole. Within days, Apple had released a security update that fixed the problem: You are now warned with a dialog box when you download and open a widget, and you can remove them, unlike in the first iteration of Dashboard.

Like using the built-in firewall, taking advantage of OS X's Software Update is also a no-brainer. To set up automatic updates, open System Preferences, click on Software Update in the System section, and choose an interval at which to check for updates.

### **Safety software**

All the precautions I've just discussed are nonintrusive and no-cost, since they are included in the operating system. But are they enough? Just because almost no Mac vulnerabilities have turned into full-blown exploits in recent years, does that mean it won't happen? It would be foolish to think so, and OS X's defenses aren't foolproof. I tried downloading the malicious widget mentioned above, and found that the system's warning said only "do you want to install the program 'zaptastic'"? That doesn't tell me anything about the program or warn me that it's potentially harmful. Only by comparing the name of the applet to a database of known viruses or spyware would I learn that I shouldn't install it.

I checked out a spyware scanner from Securemac.com called MacScan 2.0, after speaking with the vendor at Macworld Expo and secretly thinking "Yeah, right.

Mac spyware. Show me, dude."

What the vendor showed me was a list of programs that its system had been intentionally infected with. So back at home, I downloaded a trial version of the US\$25 program and scanned my system. Predictably, MacScan found no malicious apps. I checked out the company's list of known spyware, and it consists mostly of keyloggers — programs that can be surreptitiously installed on a computer to record a user's activities — although MacScan does identify some Trojan horses and remote dialers as well.

Since I don't share my Mac with anybody, and there's no one in my home office who'd want to spy on me, I don't need to worry much about keyloggers. And I wasn't completely satisfied with the amount of information provided by MacScan: There are generic descriptions of the various general categories of malicious software, but no information about the specific programs, such as how prevalent they are or how much damage they are capable of. Spyware scanners for Windows often give you this kind of information.

### **Antivirus scanner**

I also tried a free, open-source antivirus scanner for OS X, called ClamXav. I found it to be reasonably full-featured, allowing me to schedule

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## ***MacLab is Back in Session***

Mac Lab is a Special Interest Group (SIG) associated with the Kitsap Computing Seniors. The Lab offers an opportunity for persons interested in the Macintosh computer to gain some hands-on experience and get answers to questions in an informal setting. The Lab is conducted by members of KMUG.

Mac Lab meets every **Wednesday** afternoon that school is in session.

The meeting is in the Mt.St. Helens Lab (Room 17) at Ridgetop Jr High School from 2:45pm until 4:45pm. If you have any questions contact Gwen Kauffroath (360)377-1715; gwenk17@comcast.net

### ***Con't from page 2, Mac Security***

scans and specify folders to watch. It was easy to install and run, and scanned everything on my system, including my e-mail files. When I ran it, ClamXav found a potentially harmful attachment.

Scanning e-mail is important because Mac users could unwittingly forward an infected message attachment received from a Windows user. In fact, catching and containing crud received from Windows users is currently the best reason to use a virus scanner on the Mac. I haven't used ClamXav for long, but I'm keeping it on my Mac. I'd recommend giving it a try.

### **A firewall that tells too much**

And then there's Little Snitch, a complement to the OS X firewall that monitors which programs on your system are calling out to the Internet, and through which ports. This \$25 shareware has a trial that lasts for only 3 hours, but that's probably long enough to alert you to any suspicious programs — or drive you crazy, whichever comes first.

When I tried Little Snitch, it repeatedly popped up warnings for innocent connections (such as my e-mail program sending a message) even if I checked the "allow forever" option. And Little Snitch requires a rather high degree of computer know-how: It doesn't give you any hints as to which programs are legitimate and whether they should or shouldn't be using a particular port. I got numerous warnings related to my system connecting to my iDisk remote storage — but they weren't easily recognizable and could have been very worrying.

ZoneAlarm for Windows does a much better job of

interpreting connections and allowing you to turn off particular alerts. Little Snitch is getting kicked off my system.

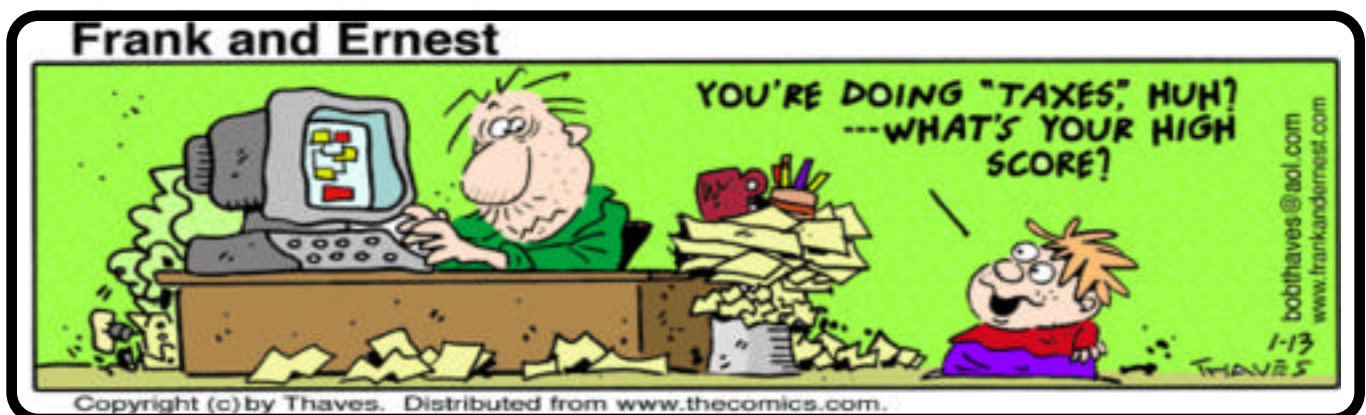
### **Other options**

There are a handful of commercial antivirus programs and security suites for the Mac as well, including McAfee's Virex, Symantec's Norton Antivirus and Personal Firewall, and Intego's collection of security products for the Mac, including ChatBarrier (an iChat encryption product), NetBarrier, and Virus Barrier. Last winter, Macworld compared Mac security products, and the reviewer liked Intego's \$70 VirusBarrier best among the antivirus products reviewed. And in a Macworld roundup of third-party software firewalls, the reviewer found that these products didn't add significant improvements over the built-in OS X firewall.

After mulling all of this over, I think I've reformed a bit. I now have a few more defenses in place and a healthy caution about downloading and installing unknown files — but I'm not paranoid. I'll fork over a donation to the developer of ClamXav, to make sure he keeps updating the product, and I'll keep an eye on information sources like Mac Security News and MacInTouch.

Mostly, I figure that I'll take the same reasonable, sensible security precautions that I take with my Windows PC to keep out most of the crud — and I won't be surprised when the Mac crud inevitably surfaces.

Rebecca Freed , The Mac Sceptic, looks at Mac technologies and products and identifies what's hot—and what's just hype. Rebecca writes for PC World Magazine. ●



*from the ApplePRESS*

## **RICK'S PLACE**

**By: Rick Calicura,  
DVMUG President Emeritus**

*This article is excerpted from the July 05 issue of the ApplePRESS, the newsletter of the Diablo Valley Macintosh User Group. ed.*

### **Save It!**

Sometimes you gotta wonder. We all know that the Macintosh is not the dominant computer platform in the world. Microsoft long ago won the operating system wars, but you do have to wonder why, when our OS is so superior, so many choose to use Microsoft. The other day at the Martinez Yardbirds store, we had occasion to visit with Dennis, a kitchen designer. Dennis was quite proficient at moving that mouse around and designing away. However, watching him, I noted he wasn't doing any SAVING. I thought to myself, "My, how brave, doing big jobs like that without saving," and then I thought well, Yardbirds wouldn't have unstable software. Then and there the PC froze up and poor Dennis lost everything. Now we know Macs used to freeze like that, and before OS X we would have to reboot, but now when such a freeze happens, we only have to restart the one application. Ain't we lucky? If we save early and often...

### **OS X Maintenance**

You have seen the numerous instances on our BBS where folks will describe problems and get the familiar admonition to "Repair Permissions." Having delivered that advice many times, perhaps I should take the time to explain the why and how of this basic maintenance operation. David Pogue (*\_e Missing Manual, OS X 3rd Edition*) tells us that OS X has adopted a rigid scheme of permissions (or privileges). Just about everything on the Mac has an owner, and that owner has exclusive permission to use, modify, edit or delete the information therein. The Administrator (usually

you) can assign access permissions to others as well.

These permissions can become "confused," so Apple has designed a wonderful utility to attack these problems. On your hard drive (if you are using any flavor of OS X) you will find an application called (curiously) DISK UTILITY. Go ahead, look. To find Disk Utility, open your hard drive and then open your APPLICATIONS folder. Inside Applications is a folder called UTILITIES and inside that is your Disk Utility application. You might even want to place that application on your DOCK as it is going to be quite useful to you in the future.



To use Disk Utility, simply double click it. A window will open up. You should see a side bar on the left with an icon of a hard drive and an icon of a hard

drive beneath it. The upper icon will show the brand and type of drive, and the icon below will bear the name you have chosen (or accepted) for your hard drive. If you SELECT (that means you simply SINGLE click on it) the lower icon, you will then see some choices at the top of the window, one of which is FIRST AID. Go ahead and click FIRST AID and then observe in the lower left of the window you will see two choices:

VERIFY Permissions

REPAIR Permissions

Choose REPAIR and be patient; sometimes this can take up to a half hour (maybe more). You can read in the window what the application is doing—repairing things before your very eyes.

This is truly remarkable and I encourage you to perform the Repair Permissions BEFORE and AFTER (yes, twice) when installing a new system or applications to prevent troubles.

### **Free Info**

There is a FREE magazine available to us Mac users... Mac Companion. It has been "published" online for

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## *Con't from page 4, Rick's Place*

sometime and can be read on line or printed out (be warned—it is over 100 pages). Check it out at [www.macompanion.com](http://www.macompanion.com).

### **Intel Inside?**

From Steve Jobs' announcement at the Worldwide Developer's Conference, held recently in San Francisco, it appears that by 2006 at least some of us will be "blessed" with Intel chips. I am sure you all are aware of the reasons offered and I won't

further discuss those here.

I would like to express my optimism about the switch. I really believe that this is going to be just fine. I have already seen reports from developers who have been using the new prototype Intel machines. These reports are pretty good.

An added benefit will be that you should be able to

## *Con't on page 6, Rick's Place*

*from Mac Central*

# *An Unwelcome Walk Down Memory Lane*

*By Cyrus Farivar*

When I bought my iBook in March 2005, I knew I wanted to get some more RAM for it, beyond the stock 256MB that shipped with the laptop. Because I didn't buy my laptop online I didn't have the option of getting extra RAM put in at build time. So I bought some third-party RAM (PNY Technologies, for what it's worth) from our good friends at J&R Computers in New York. I put my spankin' new 512MB stick in my iBook and off it went. No problem. I was thrilled.

Fast forward about six months, when I had to send in my Mac for screen repairs twice in one week. When it finally came back, I started getting kernel panics—a lot of 'em. I spent the next few weeks doing everything I could think of—PRAM, MacJanitor, Open-Firmware—nothing would shake the problem. Finally, I resorted to reinstalling Tiger and wiping the drive. When that didn't do it, I called Apple again and sent my iBook back to an Apple repair center in Tennessee.

The other day, my precious iBook finally came back, seemingly repaired. However, because I had third party RAM installed, Apple's technicians told me to take it out when I had sent the laptop. I put the memory back in, and my Mac seemed OK for about a day. Then the kernel panics returned again.

I went to the nearest Best Buy and got some more PNY RAM and installed the new memory chip, on the off chance that my older RAM had somehow gotten fried. No dice—when I took the RAM out, however, the iBook worked fine. Huh.

Fast forward to the next morning, when I was at the Apple Store just a few blocks from the Macworld offices in San Francisco. The dude at the Genius Bar wouldn't touch my third-party RAM with a 512-foot pole. He popped in some test Apple RAM, and the laptop worked. So I could either suck it up and buy some Apple RAM or suffer with only 256 MB. I bought the 512MB chip.

After relaying this story to some of my colleagues, with all of us scratching our head at this problem, I finally sat down with my handy screwdriver and opened up my iBook, with five different RAM chips at the ready. I took three chips, two made by Kingston, one by Micron, my second Best Buy chip, and the new Apple Memory Module.

The Apple Memory Module gave me three beeps the first time. Then I rebooted, and couldn't get the laptop to boot. The Micron and Kingston chips gave me no problems. Then I put the Apple chip back in, and the iBook worked, but then later froze. The Kingston 512 chip seems to be the most reliable right now, but I have another appointment at the Genius Bar shortly.

Apparently not all RAM is created equal, and I want to know why. My own RAM woes aside, I'd like to know what distinguishes one RAM manufacturer from another and find out if Apple's standards are really that much stricter. ●

### Con't from Page 5, Rick's Place

run Windows and all Windows applications (in conjunction with the Windows OS) on the very same machines we will be running the Mac OS on. Interestingly, the Mac OS will NOT run on just any run-of-the-mill PC. Apparently there is code included that prevents non-Apple machines from running the Mac OS.

I believe that we will see an upsurge of new converts to the Mac as a result of this move. We will get a chance to see, probably by the time the January Macworld takes place in San Francisco.

### **New Vendor**

I found a new vendor who seems to have pretty good prices. This company operates in both the United Kingdom and the United States. I recently purchased what I think is a sensational printer from them (a SAMSUNG CLP-510n duplexing color laser printer) and saved a bundle.

They maintain an office in Phoenix (this means no tax) as well as in England. They saved me almost a hundred dollars on this printer and delivered it via UPS as promised and on time. The company can be found at [www.ebuyer.com](http://www.ebuyer.com).

### **Say Goodbye**

A caution. If you are still using an older Operating System (OS) such as 8.x or 9.x, you should know that Apple is not supporting them any more. No more development is occurring, and every day you continue to use these obsolete systems, you are drifting further away from the mainstream.

Of course, as long as your Mac continues to do what you want with the OS and software you have, there is really no reason to change. However, just today, I had a call at an office where they use OS 8.x and I'll tell you, it was difficult to dredge up the old information I needed to repair the

## *Meeting Program for March 16th Jeff Peterson from Olympic Printers*

deficiencies that I found on the machine.

Of course, no one but Bill Gates can afford to go out and buy the newest of the new all the time, but be aware that older systems are getting quite "long in the tooth" and when something happens, it is getting more and more difficult to repair them. ●

from MacWorld

## *Mac 911 Help Desk*

*By Christopher Breen*

Reader David Craig's spouse prefers a picture-less login. He writes:

My wife and I share a Power Mac G4 running OSX Tiger 10.4.2. I like having a picture with my login, but she would prefer to have nothing. Is there a way to remove it?

Not exactly. You can certainly have a really uninteresting picture (a blank image), but you'll still see an empty box when you log in. If this will suffice, I'd do this by simply replacing the image with an all-white image. To do so, open an empty window, press Shift-Command-4 to invoke the Selection Screen Shot doohickie, and select an area of white to create a white .png image.

Con't on page 7, Mac 911

### Disclaimer

The KMUG Newsletter is a compilation of information related to the Macintosh community or areas which impact Macintosh computing. Content comes from a variety of sources: contributions, other user groups or internet news sources. All articles are given full credit for the author and it's source.

The information presented in the KMUG Newsletter does not reflect the opinion of KMUG, but is presented for it's informational content.

### Con't from page 6, Mac 911

Launch System Preferences, choose Accounts, select your wife's account, click the Picture tab, click the Edit button, and drag the white .png image you created. A white box will appear in the image pane when your wife next logs in.

Of course you can also apply this hint to change the login image from the stock images supplied by Apple to a favorite picture of your guinea pig.

### Evening Meeting

## ***KMUG Minutes***

***March 02, 06***

President Don Diehl opened the meeting at 6:30PM. He mentioned a Wallstreet Journal article about Apple. He also reviewed the invitation for people to come and let the IRS-AARP people help them with filing their Income Tax. He recommended Turbo Tax for your own records. We discussed ClamXav as a good antivirus. This is a free program and several people recommended it as a good program to prevent damage from the current worm and Trojan Horse etc. that are being talked about again.

Don reviewed the iPhoto6 demo from Apple. A lot of people are using iPhoto now and will enjoy the new additions to it. He also mentioned that he believes the new Aperture is designed for professionals.

Lewis chaired the questions. Entourage mail, changing the default font in Word, replacing doc icons, dial assist, fax reporting were some of the things that were brought up.

Don adjourned the meeting . ●

Submitted by Gwen Kauffroath

Note that changing an image in Accounts will also change the corresponding Me image in Address Book.

One way of avoiding any kind of picture at login is to select Login Options in the Accounts system preference and, under Display Login Window As, enable the Name and Password option. With this option enabled, you and your wife will see a box that contains name and password fields when you login rather than a list of users accompanied by pictures. ●

### Evening Meeting

## ***KMUG Minutes***

***February 16, 2006***

Roy Kauffroath called the meeting to order.

Our speaker was Dane Whitson, Geek Squad Rep. from Best Buy. Robert Stephens founded Geek Squad in 1994. Geek Squad is a 24 Hr Rapid-Response Computer Support Task Force. They can help you set up wireless networks, printer sharing, and data transfer on PC or Mac. They can also help you in auto back up and recovering files. They will do

In Home Training. He said that 150' was probably as far as you could expect wireless signals to be dependable. It was mentioned that the cheap Korean made monitors are poor quality and have more dead pixels than the more pricey ones such as Westinghouse and Samsung. He brought Geek T-shirts and CD's for everyone.

Roy adjourned the meeting. ●

Submitted by Gwen Kauffroath

### ***Need some technical assistance?***

***There are several local people who are in the business of providing technical assistance for the Mac. You may have seen and heard them making presentations and answering questions at KMUG meetings. If you need help, look at the Professional Technical Assistance Referral area on the KMUG Website.***

***<http://www.homepage.mac.com/kmug1>***

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or come to one of our meetings and sign up!

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**This month's newsletter editor was Joe Williams**



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