

# John McAfee Didn't Kill Himself

## By Michael Adebuseyi

John McAfee was many things, a software developer, a businessman, a presidential candidate, a husband, a father, he was the biggest advocate and most vocal critic of McAfee Associates but most importantly, he was a man of sound, non-suicidal mind. But before we get into how that came to be, let's talk about his past life.

John McAfee was born on 18th September 1945 in Gloucestershire, England on a U.S military base to an American man named Don McAfee who was stationed there and a British woman named Joan Williams. McAfee had a tumultuous childhood. His father was an abusive alcoholic, who he lived under, in fear because of his constant unsuspected beatings. At age 15, his father killed himself with a gun. Not much more is known about the relationship between McAfee and his father, but from what we have gathered, it is not one that he looks at fondly.

At age 23, John McAfee was employed by NASA's institute for Space Studies in New York City as a programmer, working on the Apollo program. He held that position for 3 years before moving on to working at Univac as a software designer and then at Xerox as an operating system architect. After many years in the working world, he landed a position at Lockheed in 1986. There, he read about the Brain computer virus for the PC. The Brain computer virus was an innocuous enough virus that slowed down the floppy disk and made 7 kilobytes of memory unavailable to the PC and its intentions were just because it was created to prevent illegal copying of medical software. Despite its simplicity and innocuous nature, John McAfee was still frightened by it. So much so, he started a business creating antivirus software called VirusScan that could detect the computer virus and remove it automatically and McAfee Associates Inc was born. It is disputed whether or not VirusScan was the first commercial antivirus software. That position is in competition with G Data Software who released an antivirus program for the Ataris ST, and a trio of Czechoslovakians who released the first version of the NOD virus.

McAfee continued to work for the company for another 7 years after stepping down as head of the company and taking the position of Chief Technology Officer in 1993 and then finally quitting in 1994. Despite McAfee no longer having any involvement with the company, McAfee Associates Inc went on to do great things in the anti-virus space. In 2000, McAfee/Network Associates was the leading authority in educating and protecting people against the Love Bug or ILOVEYOU virus, one of the most destructive computer viruses in history. McAfee Associates Inc also oversaw the creation of a number of other technologies that were leading edge at the time, including firewall, file encryption, and public key infrastructure product lines. While those product lines had their own individual successes including PowerBroker (written by Dean Huxley and Dan Freedman and now sold by BeyondTrust), the growth of antivirus ware always outpaced the growth of the other security product lines. It is fair to say that McAfee remains best known for its anti-virus and anti-spam products.

In 2010 McAfee Associates was acquired by Intel and in 2014, Intel announced that they will market all McAfee related products as Intel Security. After that news became public, McAfee said "I am now everlastingly grateful to Intel for freeing me from this terrible association with the worst software on the planet." Later, the business demerged from Intel and went back to its original name.