

John McAfee

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Thesis Statement: John McAfee is a cybersecurity expert, founder of the McAfee software security company, and serial provocateur.

Born on the 18th September, 1945 in England to an English woman and American man, both having met while he was serving as a soldier during World War II a couple of years prior. His father, working as a road surveyor, moved the family to Salem, Virginia where McAfee was raised by his parents until he was 15 years old. His father, an abusive alcoholic, committed suicide with John's shotgun when John reached this age - an incident which has remained a haunting memory for him. He attended Roanoke College in which he achieved a Bachelor's degree in mathematics. This period in his life also spurred his intense abuse of alcohol and drugs as a method to cope with family stresses, which one could argue contributed to his largely bizarre behavior that follows, or was simply a testament to a naturally eccentric lifestyle.

McAfee was entrepreneurial from a young age, selling magazines door-to-door in a small business he created which gave him a small fortune. He began his software engineering career in quite an exciting period of time in the world in regards to geopolitics, technology and civilisation; in 1968 he began working at NASA, the same year as the moon landings in the midst of the Cold War. After that, he started working at a firm that coded punch-card systems where he became acquainted with the basics of computer programming. With this knowledge he began a new job working for a railroad company in Missouri to create a new computerised system for creating train schedules. His drug problem became acute while working in this position, using an entire bag of DMT causing him to have a traumatic experience with it. Despite this he continued his abuse.

In the 70s, he moved to Silicon Valley in San Francisco, where he worked for different technology companies, bouncing between positions and earning a reputation within these circles. He moved to Univac as a software designer, then Xerox as an operating system architect, being in these places for short periods of time, gaining experience in the new technologies that these tech giants were employing. This would consistently place him at the cutting edge of technology, as he worked as a software consultant for 4

years spread across two companies. His tenure as a cybersecurity aficionado began while working for Lockheed Martin, when he received a copy of the Brain virus(released January 1986, considered to be the first computer virus for MS-DOS - effectively the first virus on a widely distributed operating system.

McAfee began developing software to combat viruses, and founded *McAfee Associates*, what he is most well known for. Interestingly, but not unlike his previous endeavours, McAfee's time in his eponymous company was not long-served. The company was incorporated in Delaware, United States in 1992, and he resigned in 1994. McAfee, despite his expertise in the field has expressed distaste with his association with the company. When Intel acquired the company in 2010, and until 2014 maintained the McAfee brand, after which it was announced that all McAfee related products would be marketed as Intel Security, he responded:

“I am now everlastingly grateful to Intel for freeing me from this terrible association with the worst software on the planet”

Since leaving McAfee Associates, looking for more lucrative technologies and revenue streams, John has founded numerous companies in different fields. Though ranging from instant messaging to pharmaceuticals, he still remained at the cutting edge of software engineering.

Although a savvy businessman and being very cognizant of new technologies, namely blockchain solutions and during his time in Belize herbal antibiotics, his behavior began to be somewhat characterised as erratic, and borderline illegal.

Whilst being an active member of the technological community, he has attracted notable attention for his series of legal issues. His stay in Belize garnered an internet-wide fascination with his personal life. His house was raided and McAfee was arrested for unlicensed drug manufacturing and possession of an unlicensed weapon. In the months following, he became a suspect in an investigation in the murder of his neighbour. What follows is a string of arrests, which have culminated in civil charges brought against McAfee by the Securities Exchange Commission (governmental body that serves to protect the nation against fraud)for which he could face 30 years in prison if convicted.

In 2016, he was appointed CEO of MGT Capital Investments, and McAfee changed MGT's focus from social gaming to cybersecurity, stating in an interview that "anti-virus software is dead, it no longer works," and that "the new paradigm has to stop the hacker getting in" before they can do damage. His wild behaviour and legal issues got in the way and in August 2017, McAfee stepped down as CEO, instead serving as MGT's "chief cybersecurity visionary." In January 2018, he left the company altogether. Both sides stated that the decision was amicable, with McAfee saying that he wanted to spend all of his time on cryptocurrencies, while the company stated that they were getting pressured by potential investors to disassociate themselves from McAfee.

McAfee, as a result of his online presence and ability to attract attention, has become a point of interest for anybody who finds themselves interested in some budding new technology. He has served as a bridge for many to reach an understanding of some new concept in software engineering, technology or beyond.

Despite John McAfee's newfound reputation as an "outlaw", he has remained a champion for many in their pursuit of the cutting edge.