The Ethics of Hacking
by Dissident

I went up to a college this summer to look around, see if it was where I wanted to go and what not. The guide asked me about my interests, and when I said computers, he started asking me about what systems I had, etc. And when all that was done, the first thing he asked me was "Are you a hacker?"

Well, that question has been bugging me ever since. Just what exactly is a hacker? A REAL hacker?

For those who don't know better, the news media (and even comic strips) have blown it way out of proportion; A hacker, by wrong definition, can be anything from a computer user to someone who destroys everything they can get their evil terminals into.

And the idiotic schmucks of the world who get a Commodore Vic-20 and a 300 baud modem (heh, and a tape drive!) for Christmas haven't helped hackers' reputations a damn bit. They somehow get access to a really cool system and find some files on hacking...Or maybe a friendly but not too cautious hacker helps the loser out, gives him a few numbers, etc. The schmuck gets onto a system somewhere, lucks up and gets in to some really cool information or programs, and deletes them. Or some of the more greedy ones capture it, delete it, and try to sell it to Libya or something. Who gets the blame?

The true hackers...that's who. So what is a true hacker?

Firstly, some people may not think I am entirely qualified to say, mainly because I don't consider myself a hacker yet. I'm still learning the ropes about it, but I think I have a pretty damn good idea of what a true hacker is. If I'm wrong, let one correct me....

True hackers are intelligent, they have to be. Either they do really great in school because they have nothing better to do, or they don't do so well because school is terribly boring. And the ones who are bored aren't that way because they don't give a shit about learning anything. A true hacker wants to know everything. They're bored because schools teach the same dull things over and over and over, nothing new, nothing challenging.

True hackers are curious and patient. If you aren't, how can you work so very hard hacking away at a single system for even one small PEEK at what may be on it?

A true hacker DOESN'T get into the system to kill everything or to sell what he gets to someone else. True hackers want to learn, or want to satisfy their curiosity, that's why they get into the system. To search around inside of a place they've never been, to explore all the little nooks and crannies of a world so unlike the boring cess-pool we live in. Why destroy something and take away the pleasure you had from someone else? Why bring down the whole world on the few true hackers who aren't cruising the phone lines with malicious intent?

True hackers are disgusted at the way things are in this world. All the wonderful technology of the world costs three arms and four legs to get these days. It costs a fortune to call up a board in an adjoining state! So why pay for it? To borrow something from a file I will name later, why pay for what could be "dirt cheap if it wasn't run by profiteering gluttons?" Why be forced, due to lack of the hellacious cash flow it would require to call all the great places, to stay around a bunch of schmuck losers in your home town? Calling out and entering a system you've never seen before are two of the most exhilirating experiences known to man, but it is a pleasure that could not be enjoyed were it not for the ability to phreak.

True hackers are quiet. I don't mean they talk at about .5 dB, I mean they keep their mouths shut and don't brag. The number one killer of those the media would have us call hackers is bragging. You tell a friend, or you run your mouth on a board, and sooner or later people in power will find out what you did, who you are, and you're gone....

I honestly don't know what purpose this file will serve, maybe someone somewhere will read it, and know the truth about hackers. Not the lies that the ignorant spread. To the true hackers out there, I hope I am portraying what you are in this file. If I am not, then I at least am saying what I think a true hacker should be. And to those wanna-be's out there who like the label of "HACKER" being tacked onto them, grow up, would ya?

Oh yeah, the file I quoted from...It has been done (at least) two times. "The Hacker's Manifesto" or "Conscience of a Hacker" are the two names I've seen it given (a file by itself, and part of an issue of Phrack). Either way, it was written by The Mentor, and it is absolutely the best thing ever written on the subject of hackers. Read it, it could change your life.