ToorCamp Journal, Day 1: Let the hacking begin

August 10, 2012 at 7:33 am by Amal Graafstra   1 Comment

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 [Editor's Note: Amal Graafstra is one of hundreds of people attending ToorCamp, a summer camp for geeks now under way on the Washington coast. The author of the book RFID Toys and a "double RFID implantee," Graafstra won a ticket to the event through a GeekWire contest. He's sending dispatches from the camp to give the rest of us a sense for life there. Also see his introductory post.]

Day 1 at ToorCamp started very early for me, which was great because there is only one shower with hot water for the approximately 300+ male attendees. After getting cleaned up, eating some camping breakfast (warm chili beans from a can and a banana), and relaxing in the morning sun for a couple hours chatting with fellow campers, we all settled in to hear the keynote speaker Joe Grand.

Joe is a pretty cool electronics nerd. As you can see, he was already heavily into computers at a very early age. Eventually he joined the L0pht Heavy Industries group out of Boston which, in 1998, really made a case for legitimizing "hackers" by testifying before a Senate committee hearing regarding potential vulnerabilities and the basic state of security of computers and systems in the US. More recently, Joe programmed and released his very own video game cartridge called SCSIcide for the long defunct Atari 2600 gaming system, and appeared as a lead cast member on Discovery Channel's "Prototype This" television show.

Following Joe was Quinn Norton, author and Anonymous hacker community archeologist. She studies the group's internal dynamics and the macro-sociology that Anonmyous operations command across the gamut, ranging from the protests (both online and offline) on Scientology, to the Aaron Barr incident, the birth and ultimate demise of LulzSec, and the social unrest of the now infamous Arab Spring which was supported in many ways by Anonymous members and agents. The subject matter evoked such a response that post-talk, pow-wow sessions sprang up all over the grounds.

Talks, workshops, and activities all ramped up simultaneously. It was nearly impossible to choose which I should go check out. In the HardHack Village, all manner of hardware hacking was going on. Solder stations sat ready and waiting for anyone wanting to piece together a kit or work on a circuit they brought from home, while a wide selection of different tumbler locks sat as challengers tested their skills with tension wrenches and picks at the lockpicking table.

I finally chose a workshop and sat down for a 3 hour intensive on hacking wifi networks using the WiFi Pineapple. Darren Kitchen of bak5.org explained very clearly the history of WiFi, how radios communicate frames, packets, and illustrated just how various vendors' implementations of protocols built on the IEEE 802.11 standard left plenty of room for mischief. If was one of the best things I've see so far at ToorCamp.

As the day winds down, the music picks up in Prime Dome. Meanwhile, the Castle Truck lights up and takes the show on the road as it slowly drives circles around the entire camp, self-contained DJ and dance party in full swing. The celebration is set to go until 4am, but I have to get to bed early so I can be ready to run the Implantation Station tomorrow morning.

(Click any image below to open a photo gallery)

Follow Amal

Graafstra on Twitter *@amal* and *find out more on his site*. **For more on ToorCamp**, listen to our recent GeekWire podcast interview with David Hulton, one of the organizers of the event.