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Abstract Captain Crunch released from prison after serving four months.
Crunch says he has reformed.

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Notes Contains a great photo of a handsome Captain Crunch!

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'They Still Fear Captain Crunch'

By Peter Corner
And Michael Smith
Special to the Chronicle

Lompoc,
Santa Barbara county

Maybe Ma Bell finally has gotten Captain Crunch out of her system.

Maybe he has gotten her out of his. The legendary "phone phreak" insists he has reformed, or at least he did the day in January that he was released after four months in federal prison.

"The feds fear me because of what they think I can do," he declared, speaking quickly, eyes darting nervously. "Like use the little computer terminal in my living room to explore secrets of the AUTOVON military defense network and perhaps start a little war."

"They think I've been messing with the worldwide ARPANET, leaving messages for computer freaks in Europe and Asia. Or that I've been checking out the FBI's national crime information center (NCIC) and tying up its millions of trunks. Phone phreaks have always enjoyed wiretapping the FBI."

"Now, I say it's possible to penetrate any computer linked to a telephone, reprogram it, and steal things. But I'm not saying I did this. I'm a good guy, now. I cooperated with the feds and showed them things. I tried to teach Ma Bell, too. She's the largest, leakiest computer system in the world. I can plug the leaks. Ma Bell eavesdrops on 1.8 million calls a year trying to catch phone phreaks. I think she just likes to eavesdrop. But she refused my help. Ma Bell and the FBI are paranoid."

Meet Captain Crunch, also known as John Thomas Draper, 33, a hyperkinetic electronics wizard and bachelor from Mountain View. Although he was a radioman in the Air Force, Draper basically is self-taught, and his global prowess on the touchtone phone has made him an underground hero to thousands of commonly described phone phreaks who use illegal "blue boxes" to beep their way freely through the Bell system.

Draper has been pronounced "a genius in electronics" by federal probation authorities, and his prolonged adolescence has made him anathema to all kinds of officials. Thus, last October he became the first phone phreak sent to prison.

Crunch got his handle from the famous toy whistle once given away as a treat in boxes of Cap'n Crunch cereal. He found the whistle emitted a shriek measuring 2600 cycles per second (CPS), and when you blow 2600 in Ma Bell's ear, wondrous things happen: Long-distance trunks obediently hiccup open; the "chunk-cheep" world of satellites, cables and computers awaits your fingers and you even get your dimes back.

When Crunch was an airman stationed in England, his friends would call and hold "mute" their calls (make them free) with a blast from his magic whistle.

After my discharge, I bought a Volkswagen van and roamed the California mountains exploring the Bell system from pay phones. It's a beautiful system. I computerized "blue-boxing" with my first automated unit. That baby could burp out ten pulses (beeps) per second. The FBI returned it after my first bust in 1972. They didn't know what it was. But it helped me learn the system."

Ah, yes, the system. Even now Crunch's eyes light up as he re-

tronic beeps yelping. With his computerized gizmo, Crunch could stack connections at will, creating crescendos and decrescendos of "chunk-cheeps," whipping his voice once, twice, three times across the country.

"From friends I learned the inward-operator codes, the ones the operator dials. Then I learned routing codes by dialing 800 (toll-free) numbers to see how my calls got there. Patterns started developing. Whenever you have numbers, you have patterns."

Soon Crunch became a party-line freak. Phone phreaks periodically probe the country, seeking a broken switching station. Then several hundred call it for days, sometimes weeks, picking each other's brains, learning more secrets of the system.

Then Crunch became probably the first pioneer to blue-box a call around the world: "I called Tokyo inward, which connected me to India, which connected me to Greece, which connected me to Pretoria, South Africa, which connected me to London. The operator there connected me to New York, which sent me to a California operator who rang another phone next to my elbow. There was a 29-second delay, but I could hear myself talk. It blew my mind."

His voice rises in ecstasy. "So then, I whipped my voice around the world in two directions, going east on one phone and west on the other, sending one through satellite, the other through cable. They came back together at the same instant and my two phones simultaneously. I picked them up and whirled my voice both ways

like many phone phreaks. Crunch learned an easy way to tap any phone. Operators can plug into any conversation to determine if a line is busy or broken. Crunch, who knew these inward codes, would pose as a switchman testing these lines — verification trunks, they're called — and talk an operator into plugging him in.

Once he grew impatient when a new girlfriend's line was busy for a long time. He decided to break into the conversation and impress her. But he heard her talking — "sweet talking," as he puts it — to another man. Crunch was crushed. As soon as she hung up, he called her and bellowed, "Linda, we're through" and slammed the receiver down. Even today he takes comfort in imagining her reaction. But this ended verification trunking for Crunch, or so he says.

His world began to collapse after a revealing 1973 Esquire magazine article which outlined the alleged capabilities of phone phreaks and alarmed the federal government, not to mention the phone company.

"I laughed and I cried," Crunch recalls. "As a result of that article, 25 phone phreaks got busted. Grand juries were convened in Seattle — headquarters of Phone Phreaks International — and many other cities."

"The article also detailed the historic 2111 conference. Four kinds of phone phreaks discovered an unused Telex test board trunk in the bowels of a 4A switching machine in Vancouver, British Col-

umbia, made a \$30 blue-box call to Bethlehem, Pa., and handed me the receiver. The FBI had the public phone bugged. I was on probation. It was all they needed. The FBI thought I was a national menace. They wanted to send me away forever."

John T. Draper, better known as Captain Crunch, used 'blue-boxes' (an early model shown at left) to beep his way through the Bell system.



Computer Criminals

Crunch admits that when the FBI searched his apartment, they found the terminal and an NCIC user manual, but he denies breaking into the FBI's secret files. Plea-bargaining reduced his sentence to four months in the Federal Detention Camp in Lompoc.

Crunch says he didn't mind prison. He slopped hogs (having neatly coded and named them), and lolled in the sun. First day, he tweaked a coil on his FM radio with a nail file to listen to the guard's radio calls ("Never knew when I'd need a guard," he says).

Now that he's released, he plans to start a countersurveillance and computer security business, telling people how they can debug their homes using household items like the rabbit ears on their TV sets. He thinks it's a good idea for everyone to spy on the government to keep it honest. Some experts doubt that Crunch can do all that his legend claims. To these skeptics, Captain Crunch just grins.

"I can teach people about things like laser bugs — how they shoot a laser beam to your window and it turns the whole room into a microphone. Teaching these things will make up for that godawful \$30 phone call I made against the people of the United States. Let's face it, bugging is illegal and since I'm against it, I should have the government on my side, right?"

"Unless, of course, they've got something to hide."

Next: Honesty does not compute.

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140-Car Pileup — 14 Killed

Sao Paulo, Brazil

A bus stopped suddenly on a highway in a fog with zero-visibility during morning rush-hour yesterday, triggering a chain crash that piled up 140 vehicles over four miles of highway and killed at least 14 persons.

Highway police said the crash of cars, buses and trucks along both sides of Sao Paulo's main artery also injured at least another 110.

According to a police report, a Sao Paulo-bound commute bus slowed to a near stop on the two-lane north-bound side and a car belonging to the local municipality of Cubatao swerved to avoid it, starting the chain reaction that piled up 110 cars, buses and trucks on the northbound side.

Buckled vehicles crashing through guard rails on the center traffic island collided with southbound vehicles and caused a 30-car pileup on that side, police said.

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beautiful system. I computerized 'blue-boxing' with my first automated unit. That baby could burp out ten pulses (beeps) per second. The FBI returned it after my first bust in 1972. They didn't know what it was. But it helped me learn the system."

Ah, yes, the system. Even now Crunch's eyes light up as he remembers the joys of discovery. To serious phone phreaks, the system is a gorgeous, vibrant, schematic canvas, a pulsating blanket of thousands of long-line trunks, tying into clumps of tandems at hundreds of toll-switching offices.

Crunch is not blind, but many phone phreaks are, and they can "see" tandems engaging and disengaging, switches moving, relays shunting, crossbars rotating, elec-

His voice rises in ecstasy. "So then, I whipped my voice around the world in two directions, going east on one phone and west on the other, sending one through satellite, the other through cable. They came back together at the same time. I had two phones simultaneously. I picked them up and whipped my voice both ways around the world back to me!"

This indeed was a historic moment in phone phreaking. What did he say to himself?

"Oh, just 'Hello, test one, two, three.' (high voice).

"Hello, test one, two, three.' (basso profundo).

"'Hello' (high), 'Hello' (low). 'Hello! Hello!'"

headquarters of Phone Phreaks International — and many other cities.

"The article also detailed the historic 2111 conference. Thousands of phone phreaks discovered an unattended test board in the bowels of a switching machine in Vancouver, British Columbia. We'd blue-box our way to Vancouver, beep out 304 (the area code) then 2111, and be talking to hundreds of people. The Canadian government went bananas when they read this. I think this is where I got tapped by the feds."

"Most phone phreaks were high school kids who scared easily. I got busted and put on probation. They caught me calling Sydney, Australia, to find out what the hit tunes were."

After that, Crunch swears he was a good boy until 1970. He started learning about computers, got a job as a programmer, and went to technical school. "I built a radio monitoring station and while I'd study I'd listen to the FBI and Secret Service. It was fun during the Patty Hearst thing. I'd hear them chasing down leads..."

But the FBI apparently didn't like the idea that Crunch had a computer terminal in his home, a loan from his company. The FBI didn't like that at all.

"I was done in by a snitch," he says bitterly. "They grabbed a kid who used a blue-box and call-diverter to make \$50,000 in illegal calls charged to an adult he didn't like."

"The kid came to me and I yielded to temptation. He took me

Woman Says She Was Tied, Gagged

Santa Cruz

A woman has told police she was kidnaped at gunpoint from a supermarket parking lot Saturday afternoon, held bound and gagged for two days, and released in Redwood City Monday night, police said yesterday.

Puzzled authorities were unable to obtain details of the reported abduction because the victim, Lois Wycoff, 28, was said to be under severe emotional distress as a result of the experience.

"She breaks down and cries whenever she talks about it," said an investigator in the Santa Cruz county district attorney's office.

But authorities did say that earlier this year, Wycoff reported receiving numerous anonymous telephone calls from a man who threatened to rape and murder her.

One of the threatening calls was traced to a pay phone on the first floor of the Santa Cruz county Governmental Center, where Wycoff works as a coordinator for the county's water conservation program.

The district attorney's office took the threats seriously enough to issue her a walkie-talkie with which she could call police.

Co-workers told police that Wycoff had worked a full day for the county Saturday, but when she left to walk home, she didn't take the radio with her. It was found later on her desk.

Police said after she turned up Monday, Wycoff phoned a friend who drove her to Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz, where she was treated for unspecified minor injuries and released.

Our Correspondent

Rehnquist Denies POA Plea In Police Promotion Dispute

Washington

Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist denied yesterday a request by a group of San Francisco police officers seeking to block the promotion to sergeant of 22 minority policemen in the department.

The matter is now before the state courts and Rehnquist's denial does not mean that the officers will be promoted.

The action stems from a suit alleging employment discrimination that was filed in 1973 against the Police Department and San Francisco Civil Service Commission by Officers for Justice — a group of

mostly minority policemen — and by the NAACP.

Subsequently, a challenge was filed by the Police Officers Association, representing a majority of the personnel in the department, on grounds that the promotions would violate the rights of non-minority officers.

Rehnquist's denial yesterday of the challenge by the Police Officers Association was not accompanied by any comment.

The Supreme Court justice heard the request because he oversees the judicial circuit that includes California.

Our Correspondent