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Marty Zenthoefler

photo by Leah Beckham

A Conversation with Marty Zenthoefler

By Kurt Neufang

MARTY ZENTHOEFER IS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE U.S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT and an 18-year resident of the Frisco community. His work could best be described as an interesting and complicated type of technical police work. He sat down with us to explain his career choice and the benefits it provides to honest citizens. FSM indicates “Frisco STYLE Magazine.”

FSM: Tell me a little about your job at the Treasury Department?

Marty: I am a special agent, a Computer Investigative Specialist. The division is called TIGTA (Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration). About 5 years ago this group was pulled out of the I.R.S. and made a separate agency under the Department of Treasury. Our work consists of a tremendous amount of Computer Forensics.

FSM: Can you define “Computer Forensics” for me?

Marty: Computer Forensics is the scientific examination and analysis of data held on, or retrieved from, computer storage media in such a way that the information can be used as evidence in a court of law.

FSM: Ok...this sounds like a combination of James Bond and CSI. Without divulging any sensitive information, what does your work entail?

Marty: One major area of focus for me is PHISHING scams. This is where someone sets up a bogus web site and sends a message that says something like, “There has been a security problem with your account...” The e-mail then asks to have your personal identification information provided. You are then linked to a screen that closely resembles one like that of the

IRS, Citibank, E-Bay, etc. This is one way that identity theft occurs.

FSM: Other than identity theft, what are other areas you would investigate?

Marty: We would be involved in other system intrusions and conduct computer forensic analysis. This would involve such areas as child pornography and internal corruption within the IRS. There are approximately 350 investigators in our department and I am involved in investigations throughout the mid-western US. The White Water investigation and the Oklahoma City bombing were two cases that involved our expertise.

FSM: Regarding the participation that your agency had with the Oklahoma City bombing, what were some interesting things (that you can share) that were uncovered in the investigation?

Marty: We were not directly involved with the investigation of the bombing suspects. Part of our agency mission at the time was to provide protection for IRS employees. Once the bombing occurred, it was imperative to setup additional safeguards in the event the IRS office was also a target of domestic terrorism. We also provided support to other federal law enforcement agencies whose offices had been destroyed.

FSM: What do you feel is the most interesting thing you have discovered in your work?

Marty: The actual search for evidence can be extremely tedious. Sometimes the evidence just pops out at you and other times you must dig and dig. One particular investigation involved the multi-million dollar theft of tax payments and identity theft. Through a series of keyword searches on seized computers, we were able to identify data located in unallocated space (an area of electronic media to which no files are assigned) containing specific information about the thefts. A number of perpetrators and coconspirators were subsequently brought to justice. After spending hours and hours trying

to locate something of significance, the exhilaration of pinpointing crucial information is quite satisfying.

Additionally, I have worked on a number of child pornography investigations - government employees possessing child pornography on their government issued computers. Having young children myself makes these cases particularly difficult to work, but the satisfaction of knowing the perpetrators will spend time in prison and be identified as sex offenders does help to get through it. Keeping our children safe is one of the most important contributions I feel I can make.

FSM: Why did you decide to move to Frisco?

Marty: We wanted to move out to an area close enough to the hospital where my wife was working, but outside the urban area of Dallas. We moved to Stonebriar 14 years ago.

FSM: What are some things you like about the Frisco community?

Marty: My wife and I enjoy the private Christian education our

daughters are receiving at Legacy Christian Academy. Also, I like the economic development here in Frisco, and the way that new businesses are being welcomed into the community. Frisco has family oriented venues such as baseball and soccer that make this an attractive place to live.

FSM: Where did you grow up?

Marty: I was born in Colorado Springs, CO. I went to the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. I majored in Business Administration, graduating in 1981.

FSM: What is the mascot of the University of Northern Colorado?

Marty: The Bears.

FSM: What was your first car?

Marty: Now that brings back memories. My first car was a 1969 Chevy Chevelle. I bought it in 1976 and drove it until 1985. I was involved in a 50-car pile up south of Denver where I ran it into a Deputy Sheriff's vehicle. Following that mishap, the car and I parted ways."

FSM: What are your hobbies?

Marty: I enjoy snow skiing, biking and

golf. Also, any activities where I can be involved with my two daughters.

FSM: What is your favorite movie?

Marty: I think the Passion of the Christ was the most moving movie I've ever seen. It is difficult to watch that movie and not be affected by the vivid account of Christ's last days.

FSM: What are some tips for our readers on how they can help prevent their computers from being hacked?

Marty: "In our business, prosecution can be difficult if the hackers generate their work from overseas. However, there are some steps that folks can take to help prevent computer hacking. These would include:

Make sure to have a firewall set up for your computer.

Keep the latest virus software up and running.

Your operating system should be updated with security patches."

Kurt Neufang is a freelance writer and former Frisco resident currently living in North Carolina.



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