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**Chaos Around the Campfire**  
 by [Steve Kettmann](#)

3:00 a.m. 9.Aug.99.PDT

BERLIN -- Steffen Wernery co-founded the Berlin-based Chaos Computer Club back in 1984, and worked closely with the group for more than a decade.

But his new passion is lock-picking, and his tent at this weekend's Chaos Communication Camp was easily the most active and crowded to be found.

 See also: [Geeks in Tents = Chaos](#)

"I got my first Apple in 1982," he said. "For me a computer is a tool, like a camera. If you have a good idea, it can give you more power. But I see a lot of shit happening in the computer world.

"Security? Security is if you're a child's bike, a tricycle, just behind a train. That's security. There are better jobs in the world, more creative, than making security."

Lock-picking, to Wernery, is creative. And hordes of people agreed, many of them women -- though men outnumbered women at CCC by a wide margin.

"It's been crazy," said Denebi, a computer science student wearing a sweatshirt that said in German "You can now throw away your computers. I did some lock-picking!"

Tim Matthews, head of the new Amsterdam lock-picking sport club, was one of many at the Lock-pick Village offering tutorials.

"We've been giving lock-picking lessons for beginners, but I've also been learning a lot from others," he said.

Matthews offered his own tools (the three basic picks are the hook pick, the diamond pick, and the snake pick) and assured a visiting Wired News reporter who popped open two locks in succession that he was a natural. There's no question: Lock-picking is fun.

"I started lock-picking to get relaxed from computers," said Wernery. "You have no problem with updates or viruses. Now I have more organizational work with the sports club. I think in one or two years the lock pickers and the hackers will be working in the same direction."

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**In deep doo-doo:** A conclave of hackers without Internet access is a little like a gathering of chefs

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with no food to prepare. But that's just what the 1,500 people hooked into the CCC network faced for several hours on Friday night.

The flashing red light mounted near the microwave tower went dark as the crew at the Network Operations Center tried to run down the problem, and ever-higher-pitched shrieks of "I want to check my email!" sounded from various tents.

Eventually, a young culprit was identified as the one messing with the system [flat-pinging] -- and hit with a suitably horrific punishment.

"I found the one responsible and came here to the Network Operations Center and 70 people followed me to go after the guy," said Felix von Leitner. "It was like the Inquisition and the guy was maybe 15 or 16 years old.

"We said 'You are going to clean the toilet' and he said, 'OK.'"

Given the reports of overflowing toilets at some sites around the camp, the punishment sounded sure to make an impression.

"He was required to clean only one toilet because more would have been too massive a punishment," explained Hans Huebner of NOC.

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**Founder Wennery on hacker excess:** "I was a leader of the CCC, but now I'm taking a step back," said co-founder Steffen Wennery.

"You need time to get perspective. I can sleep at night now. I had a lot of tough nights in the 1980s. I heard about one person here at CCC who was sitting in the tent in front of his terminal for 60 hours with no food, no water, and no trips to the toilet. They had to take him to the medical tent. I know because I saw him there."

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**Space shots:** It wouldn't be a three-day rural gathering of thousands of young people without some alternative stimulation. This being Europe, and many in attendance coming from Amsterdam, it was no surprise to find "space cakes," that is, THC-enhanced chocolate cake.

More original were the "space waffles."

"It's very tasty - and they work," said Franz, one of three working the space waffle table. "We are fighting for legalization. Our company is called Flying Egg. We will have waffles at the Hemp Parade later this month in Berlin. But we can't be so open there. This is a restricted area."

What's next? Space Lorraine? Space Burritos? Space-a-dillas?

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