

# MAILBOX

## THE ABC OF DOG STREET

The four “students” sitting on the ABC store steps are: **Joe Reynolds '56, Bruce Rhea '54, Joe Kinder '54 and Pete Freeauf '54.** It was obviously winter, judging by their clothing, and the ABC store was not yet open. It opened later on Saturdays, and those guys were there to make certain of an appropriate purchase, probably because they had a date for that evening. The policeman, one of the six on the force, didn't seem to mind that all were underage. Only the various deans really seemed to care. And, by the way, there are two indentations on the brick wall at the College Corner. Recently I discovered that my back side still fits neatly into those indentations. What fond memories.

JIM DUFF '54  
Richmond, Va.

## INTERNET PRIVACY

Dear Ms. Pescatore:

Reading your excellent article in the latest *Alumni Magazine* [Spring 2010 issue] has inspired me to pass along to you a few thoughts of my own.

Part of the problem is that law always lags technological development. Back when companies first began to put customer information on computers, seemingly nobody raised issues about ownership of that data and what could (and should) be done with it. Lacking regulation of usage, many (if not most) companies took the position that they could use customer

data in any way they chose, including selling it. The default was an automatic “opt in.” (“Opt out” wasn't even available until recent years.)

Eventually, privacy policies and a chance to “opt out” became the norm, but these documents were discouragingly lengthy (for the average reader), full of legalese and one-sided. I once proposed a statement for opening an account that went something like: “I am choosing to begin doing business with you on the condition that (1) you will immediately encrypt any personal information I provide you, and (2) that you will not share this information with anyone (including subsidiaries) without my express permission. Failure to comply will terminate our business relationship, and may lead to legal action.” You can probably imagine how far I would get with this approach.

As your article implies, there is a great deal of naïveté among Internet and social network users. They need to fully understand what the threats are and how to minimize those threats. This requires individual responsibility for security of their personal information, and less depending on “the system” to provide protection. But if others abuse their trust or fail to provide adequate safeguards, there should be accountability with meaningful penalties. All too often releases of personal data seem to be treated as simply “unfortunate accidents.”

Users need to remember that there will always be someone out there (often over-



seas) who can hack into just about any system. (That's why I am still reluctant to bank online.) Hackers are always one step ahead of security experts.

The latest in possible personal information exposure could result from revelations at the Facebook developers conference (sometimes known as “f8”) now ongoing (see [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com) for April 22 and later).

As for the CDT “Take Back Your Privacy” campaign, lots of luck!

I just wanted to have my say on a subject I feel strongly about.

RICHARD S. MCKEE '54  
San Mateo, Calif.

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*We welcome letters from our readers and reserve the right to edit them. Brevity is encouraged. Please send correspondence to Melissa V. Pinard, Editor, William and Mary Alumni Magazine, P.O. Box 2100, Williamsburg, VA 23187 or e-mail [alumni.magazine@wm.edu](mailto:alumni.magazine@wm.edu).*

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