

Farmington man's invention thwarts high-tech hijacking

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
STAFF WRITER

In these days of electronic eavesdropping and industrial espionage, Hector Vasquez may just become the Bill Gates of anti-bugging telephone devices.

Vasquez, owner of Livonia-based NETCORP, recently invented the Line Detective™, a compact, self-contained testing device that monitors your telephone line and measures changes to your dial tone.

He's betting his device will help the security industry save American businesses millions of dollars worth of stolen ideas.

"Unfortunately, this is the biggest kept secret in the United States," he said of the American Society for Industrial Security's estimated \$82 billion in potential intellectual property losses for U.S. companies through monitoring and interception of information.

Vasquez, a Farmington resident, posed an example of electronic theft using a modular line interface for a recorder.

"If an individual sends a 401(k) transfer via the data line and a perpetrator records the transaction, the perpetrator can then, through a playback feature of the recording device, download the signals into a modem and print out the document."

He offers a solution: "The Line Detective is the only one in the world that can detect a modular interface to a tape recorder connected to a telephone line."

The device also detects someone pinching the line with a line-man test set, said Vasquez, who knows firsthand about line-pinchings: "I used to install court-ordered wire taps for Ameritech."

Vasquez' career in working with specialized telephone systems includes 14 years with Michigan Bell and Ameritech and 10 years developing his own telephone service company, Interconnect.

An inventor

An entrepreneur at heart, Vasquez developed the prototype

■ 'The Line Detective is the only one in the world that can detect a modular interface to a tape recorder connected to a telephone line.'

Hector Vasquez
—inventor and Farmington resident

for the Line Detective two years ago. His aim was to make the so-called "Baby Bell" more competitive with the larger companies in troubleshooting telephone lines.

Locating and repairing a defective cable pair (each line is made up of two intertwined wires) is tremendously expensive, Vasquez said. A "loaded" man hour (salary and benefits) tops \$78, and it takes two or three employees to hunt and test the cable pairs.

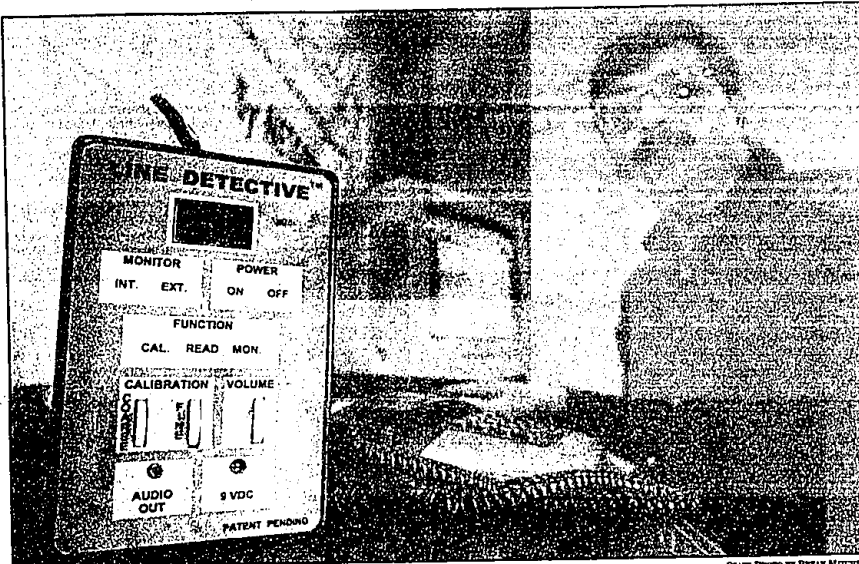
"My device, as a self-test method, requires just one employee."

Defining the cost-effectiveness of the Line Detective more specifically, Vasquez said two or three employees using conventional detection methods can test 100 cable pairs per hour; using the Line Detective, one employee can test one cable pair per five seconds.

Vasquez already has made the round of security industry trade shows with the Line Detective's forerunner, Detector 2000™. He quickly laid whatever naïveté he had about the prevalence of electronic eavesdropping. "The stories I received from 007s all over the world were shocking."

He demonstrated Detector 2000's effectiveness by connecting various eavesdropping equipment and wiretaps. Response to the product was great, he said. The Line Detective is second-generation technology. It can even detect a transceiver from a camera connected to a phone line.

Vasquez said friends have questioned his sanity in risking the security of a well-established



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

Dialed in: Farmington resident Hector Vasquez's invention, the Line Detective, prevents piracy of computer files transmitted over phone lines.

business for the uncertainty of the world of invention. He credits his risk-taking spirit to his parents.

Life experience

Vasquez was born in Brownsville, Texas, one of 16 children. When his father lost his job as mechanic for the city's bus transportation department, the family became migrant workers.

They picked cotton in Texas, asparagus in Iowa, cucumbers near Chicago, and cherries and apricots in Traverse City. A decent meal at the end of the

day wasn't a certainty, and for a period the family slept in a barn. From age 11 to 18, Vasquez turned over all the money he earned to the family.

Vasquez' mother instilled competitiveness in her children by setting up contests of who could pick the most. Vasquez was always the fastest picker.

"I was very sensitive about not being a second-class citizen. I think that made me more determined than other kids," he said.

Eventually, Vasquez went into the Air Force, where he worked with a nuclear warhead special

security force. "It was like a Mission Impossible type of environment," he said.

After he left the Air Force, he was sought by Michigan Bell as part of their Affirmative Action program. He attended North Western Michigan College full time while working full time for Michigan Bell in Traverse City.

"It was hard and smart," he said about the experience.

Vasquez quickly climbed the ranks at Michigan Bell. Eventually, Traverse City was his responsibility. "One man was Ma Bell to an entire community."

That was one of the greatest times of my life because I couldn't blame mistakes on anyone else by myself."

For Vasquez, whose heroes include Abraham Lincoln and Babe Ruth, failure is not a threat. "The fear of failure has been transparent because I've seen so many winners who have failed."

Persistence in the face of adversity remains a legacy of his parents. "I felt if my parents could do it, it was reason for me to venture out as an entrepreneur."

POLICE AND FIRE CALLS

The following are police and fire incidents that occurred in Farmington and Farmington Hills during the past week.

VANDALISM

In Farmington Hills:

Vandals scratched the rear and side quarter panels on a 1998 Mercury Villager parked on Northwestern Highway March 28, causing \$500 damage.

Some 17 mailboxes were struck with a baseball bat on Lancaster March 20, causing \$340 damage.

Vandals used either a key or knife to scratch the side of a 1998 Buick Regal parked at Crosswind Condominiums March 20, causing \$1,000 damage.

THEFT

In Farmington Hills:

Someone stole a gas-powered chain saw and a kerosene heater from a garage on Southfarm March 19.

A sum of \$3,700 in cash was stolen from a Woodview Condominiums residence March 19.

A woman's wallet containing \$200 U.S. and \$190 Canadian cash and a cellular phone was stolen from a locker at Target on Grand River March 20.

Police arrested a Hills male, 16, and another teen, described as a foster child, after \$4,000 in

jewelry and \$250 was stolen from a home on East Huntman Drive March 20. Police questioned the 17-year-old who lives in the home and told them he pointed out the money and jewelry to a friend, who stole it to buy marijuana. When police arrested the 16-year-old, they found 11 grams of marijuana in his room.

BREAK-INS

In Farmington Hills:

A thief broke the driver's window and stole a cellular phone from a 1997 Ford Explorer parked on Orchard Lake Road March 19. A 1999 Infiniti wagon was also broken into and a cellular phone stolen in the same spot.

URINATING IN PUBLIC

In Farmington Hills:

Police ticketed a Detroit man, 24, for urinating outside of Mr. Mower on Grand River at 1:40 a.m. March 20.

DRUNKEN DRIVING

In Farmington Hills:

Police arrested a Farmington Hills man, 35, for drunken driving on southbound Tuck and Folsom at 2:30 a.m. March 20. Police stopped the 1987 Chevrolet station wagon for riding on the shoulder. The driver refused to take a Breathalyzer.

Police arrested a Detroit man, 39, for drunken driving on Grand River and Purdue at 8:10 p.m. March 20. Police stopped the driver of the 1989 Ford after his vehicle was being pushed. The officer could smell alcohol on the man. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .12 percent, which is above the state limit of .10 percent. Another driver, a Detroit man, 38, was also arrested for drunken driving at the scene.

Police arrested a Southfield man, 34, for drunken driving on Eight Mile and Parker at 1:05 a.m. March 21. Police stopped the 1989 Pontiac four-door car for going 64 miles an hour on eastbound Eight Mile where the speed limit is 45 mph. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .11 percent.

Police arrested a 63-year-old West Bloomfield man for driving a 1998 Cadillac Sedan DeVille while drunk on Orchard Lake and 13 Mile at 2 a.m. March 21. He had a blood alcohol level of .13 percent.

A Livonia man, 25, was arrested for drunken driving after the 1989 Mercury Cougar was involved in an accident on Grand River and Haynes at 1:55 a.m. March 21. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .14 percent.

Y breakfast highlights new members

Since Jim Fuqua joined the staff of the Farmington Family YMCA as its new executive director, he has not let a minute delay in keeping the Y at the top of its form.

The very first thing on his plate was the planning of the annual breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, March 25 for all new incoming board members and the graduation class of 1999.

To make the morning special,

Chuck Stokes of Channel 7 will be the keynote speaker.

There will also be some stories from members about their experiences at the Y.

Also on tap is the introduction of the class of 2002: James Buckley, A&W Restaurants marketing director; Ruth Demers, Kroger store manager; Ben Mondloch, The Gale Group executive vice president for marketing; Peggy Hayes, Twelve Oaks

Mall marketing director; Denise Knobbloch, Computware executive vice president of human resources; Pat Spencer, AAA director; Carligh Elaberty, Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce president; Deborah Jackson-Lum, Richard Debelis, Giffels Associates; Dan Penning, attorney at Wright-Penning.

CLARIFICATIONS

A story in the March 21 Farmington Observer should have said the site at Orchard Lake, Northwestern and 14 Mile is qualified for the Planned Unit Development option, which is

only the first step in the process. PUD is not approved until there is a written agreement between the city and developer.

According to Carolyn Mahalak

of Farmington Public Schools, students who take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program will either have transcripts marked endorsed or left blank.

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