Most people who have spent more than five minutes with me know that I am afflicted with a severe case of Monty Python addiction. Indeed, I am the founder of the Norwich University Monty Python Society which meets every week to watch an episode from the 14-DVD set of complete shows. At the 2006 graduation of students of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) at Norwich University, my arrival at the podium was greeted by a chorus of high-pitched cries of “Ni! Ni!” from dozens of graduating MSIA students, much to the dismay of the assembled dignitaries. At the SGS these days, I have corrupted many of my colleagues into greeting each other with, “G’day Bruce! G’day Sheila!” in various approximations of an Australian accent. The disease began when I was a graduate student at Dartmouth College from 1972 to 1976 and foolishly played recordings of Monty Python skits over and over while I was doing laboratory work; the skits were permanently burned into my brain. Even my saintly wife, who doesn’t even like Monty Python, has come to utter occasional phrases such as “Yes, well, of course, this is just the sort blinkered philistine pig ignorance I’ve come to expect from you non-creative garbage.”

I mention all this mostly for fun but also because of a recent incident I experienced while using the Yahoo groups to organize collaboration among contributors to the _Computer Security Handbook, Fifth Edition_ being edited by Sy Bosworth, Eric Whyne and myself and due for publication in spring 2008. I was just setting up the group message board by loading one message per chapter so that collaborators could begin adding their discussions as threaded messages appended to each discussion head when I was suddenly barred from my own group. A cryptic message from Yahoo informed me that my account had been removed from the group because it was “tagged as an auto-responder.” There was no further explanation.

A bit of exploration revealed the following explanation in the Group Managers Forum on Yahoo:

> Did your address get tagged as an auto-responder? .... That occurs when you send too many messages to Yahoogroups.com in too short a time span.

1 - This can happen when you compose replies and posts offline and then email the bunch of messages all at once when you're online.

2 - Of course, it can happen when you set you mail service to send an auto-response like, "Hi! I'm on vacation and will return next weekend."

3 - It can also happen if a virus or spammer just happens to "spoof" your email address as the "From:" and send a bunch of spew to addresses "@yahoogroups.com". (And, Yes, this can and does happen and there's nothing you can do about it!)
Well, that was it! I loaded 76 messages in a few minutes using cut/paste operations to so very quickly and that's presumably why the automated system has blocked me.

Now for the Monty Python reference. I searched to no avail for any warning about this problem in the Yahoo groups documentation. The situation thus reminded me of the classic lines from Ethel the Frog <http://tinyurl.com/2d5w5f>:

>Interviewer: Stig, I've been told Dinsdale Piranha nailed your head to the floor.

Stig: No, no. Never, never. He was a smashing bloke. He used to give his mother flowers and that. He was like a brother to me.

Interviewer: But the police have film of Dinsdale actually nailing your head to the floor.

Stig: Oh yeah, well -- he did that, yeah.

Interviewer: Why?

Stig: Well he had to, didn't he? I mean, be fair, there was nothing else he could do. I mean, I had transgressed the unwritten law.

Interviewer: What had you done?

Stig: Er... Well he never told me that. But he gave me his word that it was the case, and that's good enough for me with old Dinsy. I mean, he didn't want to nail my head to the floor. I had to insist. He wanted to let me off. There's nothing Dinsdale wouldn't do for you.<

MORAL: if you are setting up automated rules with drastic consequences for availability and utility on your networks, you might want to let people know about them in advance.

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