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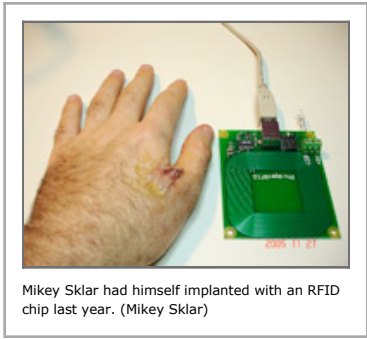
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Mikey Sklar had himself implanted with an RFID chip last year. (Mikey Sklar)

By **ALEXANDRA LEO**



May 2, 2006 — Truth or Consequences, N.M., sounds like the type of place a less-than-subtle novel about modern morality might be set, especially when the focus is a 29-year-old blurring of the line between man and machine.

A little more than six months ago, Mikey Sklar, a former UNIX engineer for a Wall Street investment banking firm, had a surgeon implant in him an RFID chip that he bought over the Internet for \$2.10.

The procedure took seven minutes and was conducted at a kitchen table.

RFID — radio frequency identification — has been around for decades but has recently recaptured the imaginations of the technology and business sectors. Wal-Mart and other companies have used RFID to modernize inventory tracking, governments have implanted the chips in passports to increase security, and EZ Pass turned to RFID to streamline the nation's toll system.

As of now, most "taggers," as do-it-yourself implanters are called, use their chips to get into their homes, computers and cars. "Originally, I just wanted to get rid of my keys," said Amal Graafstra, a Washington state native who has had an implant for more than a year.

But the boundaries have stretched.

Sklar spends much of his time building a trampoline that shoots fireballs when jumped on, and because trampolines attract children and fireballs cause harm, his access tag ensures security for the project.

Graafstra's book, "RFID Toys," chronicles the possibilities inherent in the chip, outlining everything from letting Fido in the pet door to tracking employees with active RFID. In the future, Sklar hopes to have a storage-based implant. "It would be really convenient if I could carry around all my critical files, address book and calendar at all times."

Sklar and Graafstra have disparate views on the dangers of the technology. "The read capability of the chip is only a few inches, and there's no personal information I have embedded in there," Graafstra pointed out. "If this ever becomes an oppressive technology, required by some government, I can simply take it out."

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