The assertion that programmers are not commodities is the most salient claim of the *Mythical Man-Month*. Good programmers are made of different stuff than the mediocre or bad – managerially equating these carries with it detrimental consequences. Usually this means delays and ballooning costs but, as I learned in June of 2002, can also have a severe impact on the end user.

As a new user of UNIX I was drawn to Open BSD, an operating system known for its security and little else. Developed in parallel to Open BSD is the Open SSH project, which provides secure shell for most modern free operating systems. Both are subject to rigorous code auditing to ensure freedom from defects. On June 25^{th}, 2002, it became evident that this process had broken down.

Code written by a programmer, who can be retrospectively characterized as 'bad,' had introduced a critical buffer overflow. Within hours a friend of mine replaced the contents of my home directory with a text file reading "own3d". Frustrated, I installed Microsoft Windows on the machine. Elsewhere in the world developers scrambled to repair the flaw, and the Open BSD project conceded their first (and only since) security hole.

In this case, this meant wounded pride and lost sleep for developers and users as a patch was rushed out the door. Despite the relatively limited damage inflicted on these open source projects and their users, the lesson here should not be lost (especially on industrial programmers, for whom mistakes will surely be more costly and less easily remedied.) This anecdote confirms and extends Brooks's claims: Not only are sub-par programmers poor substitutes for talented programmers, but their mere presence on a project courts Murphy's Law.