

USENIX notes

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20 Years Ago . . . and More

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January 1985. 1200 USENIX members in Dallas for the Winter Conference. Rob Kolstad gave the keynote. Lauren Weinstein gave a progress report on Stargate. Susan Nycum spoke about liability issues in Netnews transmissions.

Gad! Some topics just don't go away.

Doug Comer and Ralph Droms talked about tilde trees; there was a first paper on NFS; Steve Johnson chaired an impressive languages session (DIBOL, Modula-2, Concurrent C); papers by Ian Darwin and Geoff Collyer, by Ray Essick, by Peter Honeyman and Pat Parseghian. A status report on the USENIX UUCP project by Karen Summers-Horton and Mark Horton. Really good stuff. Meaty stuff. Oh, yeah. And Mike O'Brien on mail in CSNET.

Which reminds me.

In last June's *login.*, I celebrated the 1984 Technical Conference. It stimulated Mike O'Brien to send the following email. (Incidentally, when Mike was a graduate student, it was he who produced the first USENIX distribution tapes; Mike also was the distributor of the 50-bugs tape ["by special request"] in 1976.) Mike writes:

I wanted to note my memories of the Salt Lake City conference. If I remember correctly, this conference was the pinnacle in the series of by-then-traditional "wizards" parties." For some years, the hosting wizards at each conference had tried to outdo previous hosts in providing an exotic, elaborate party. The tradition probably began at the Santa Monica conference, when Dave Yost hosted the party at his home in the Hollywood Hills, providing a tank of

helium, a tank of oxygen, and a box full of balloons.

At this conference, the party was held in a ski cabin owned by the university, up by Snowbird or some such. To get there was quite a drive, the last part of it through the woods on a snow-covered hillside. The cabin itself was quite rustic.

No sooner had I come in the front door than a bunch of wizards, who were all gathered near the back door, asked me, “Want something to drink?”

“Not just yet, thanks,” I replied.

“No, no, you want something to drink!”

“Nope, sorry, maybe later.”

“You don’t understand. You really want something to drink!”

“All right, all right, I want something to drink!”

“OK! Take your pick!”

One of them swung open the back door, to reveal a snowbank up to the roofline. Holes had been punched in the snowbank, and bottles of various elixirs had been stuffed into the holes, so that the picture presented was of a glowing white wine-rack.

Things only got better from there.

(For a picture of Dennis Ritchie with Bill Joy and of Tom Ferrin with Mike Karels, taken at Snowbird, see *A Quarter Century of UNIX*.)