From the President

by Daniel Geer
<geer@usenix.org>

President, USENIX Board of Directors

If there is anything that attendance at a USENIX general conference gets you, it is a good sampling of what is out there. I mean people, ideas, tools, skills, outré gizmos, clever adaptations, reminders of your own inadequacies, how fast things are changing, how much there is to know, and how much just plain fun it is to breathe that kind of air.

I've been attending for a long time — obviously, or I wouldn't be the damned President. I can remember coming to my first one. Wandered into a marketing talk by Rob Kolstad — Wow! Could he ever sell supercomputers! Hmmm; this is an interesting place. Went to the Reception. Wow! That's Bill Joy! Went up and shook his hand, thanked him for all that BSD stuff I was just learning how to use. Blathered on and made an idiot of myself, I'm sure. Later, and only later, I find out that it really was Dennis Ritchie wearing a badge that said Bill Joy. Never forgave him, but that's why I keep coming. Where else can a story like that happen?

That's my point. People come the first time to see what the fuss is, but they stay for reasons that often are idiosyncratic and have on the face of it little to do with The Mission Statement. This is for all of you who are first- or second-timers — keep coming. Yeah, that sounds lame, but I challenge you to find something better. If you do, tell me, 'cuz I'm serious about excellence without hype. But until you do, come to USENIX and watch for that moment when you say to yourself, "USENIX is only a month away and I can't wait to see my colleagues again."