

N Years Ago: Anniversaries

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We emphasize certain anniversaries: lustra (five-year periods) and decades (ten-year periods) especially.

In 1975, on June 18, Mel Ferentz ran a meeting of the "Unix Users' Group" at the City University of New York. There were about 40 attendees.

June 17—20, 1980, saw over ten times that number gather at the University of Delaware. Steve Daniel distributed "A News" there. The first real news reader. NETNEWS had been written by Steve Bellovin and revised by Daniel and Tom Truscott. There were 15 sites on the UUCP network. That Delaware meeting saw Armando Stettner and Bill Munson recruit Bill Shannon to DEC.

June 10—14, 1985, there were 1,730 attendees at the Portland, OR, meeting. Vic Vyssotsky was the keynote speaker. Other speakers were Gordon Bell, Eric Allman, Bjarne Stroustrup, Rob Pike, Dave Presotto, Andy Koenig, Tom Ferrin, Dave Yost, Dennis Ritchie, Don Libes, Mike Hawley, Ed Gould, Sam Leffler, Dave Korn, Kirk McKusick, Mike Karels, Brian Redman, and . . . Tektronix sponsored a truly memorable reception.

June 11—15, 1990, saw about 1,200 gather in Anaheim to listen to Dennis Ritchie talk about "What happens when your kid turns 21?" There were a number of memorable papers (Cheriton, Ousterhout, Farmer, and Spafford, etc.) and a really stunning session on music by Peter Langston and Mike Hawley. Though it may seem absurd, they were even better than they had been in Atlanta in 1986!

USENIX has always been a place where real users got together to pool their knowledge and to renew acquaintance. It's hard to think that in 20 years we've seen the rise and demise of store-and-forward networks; that I can recall V and Mach and Sprite and a host of other systems. The first papers on C++ and on Tcl. The announcement of 3BSD; of 4.4BSD.

Give credit to IBM: Big Blue sponsored the meetings that gave rise to SHARE from 1955 on. Software exchanges are nothing new (Mike O'Brien, take a bow); hardware tips aren't, either (your turn, Tom Ferrin). But from May 1974 to now, USENIX has been a focal point.

Postlude

Tom Duff sent the following:

I just read your mention of the "10th anniversary" USENIX meeting in Portland. I hadn't thought about that meeting in a long time.

I met my wife Susan for the first time two days before that meeting.

I can't help but remember the fireworks after the outdoor banquet and my visit to the Portland municipal rose garden.

Also, the first (non-Bell Labs) UNIX users' meeting may have been in 1974, but the first International meeting was in NYC, summer of 1975. A delegation from Toronto including Mike Tilson (I think), Ron Baecker, and me drove down in Bill Reeves's orange Datsun micro-car. Surely the meetings before I started attending aren't counted.

Anyway, cheers, and pardon me for interrupting your nap.