

USENIX notes

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Members of the USENIX Association receive the following benefits:

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IN MEMORIAM:

LEWIS A. LAW, 1932–2010

Lou Katz, Founding President, USENIX Association, and Peter H. Salus, former Executive Director, USENIX Association

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Lew Law, who served as the first Secretary of the USENIX Association. When the first organizational meeting was held, at Columbia University in May 1978, Lew was selected as a representative of universities, as was Mel Ferenz. Mars Gralia was selected to represent government labs, and Peter Weiner came from a commercial UNIX site. Lou Katz was the fifth wheel, selected to give the organizing board an odd number of (equally odd) people. Lew was elected chairman of this organizational committee.

Ultimately, Mel was made Treasurer of the nascent organization, Lew received the role of Secretary, and Lou Katz was elected President. In his role as Secretary, Lew was an amazing asset. His meeting minutes were not merely simple recitals of those present and of votes on motions. Rather, they summarized in a very readable form the discussions that had taken place, so that readers could see not only what decisions had been taken but what considerations had led to the decisions.

The committee of which Lew was voted the chairman had “the purpose of proposing a set of bylaws for an organization of users of UNIX* installations. . . . The name of the committee shall be the USENIX** committee.” The name USENIX was coined by Lew's wife, Margaret.

Lew died on Sunday, February 14, 2010, after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease. He was 77. Born June 18, 1932, in Rubery, England, he attended Kings Norton Grammer School in Birmingham and graduated from Birmingham University with a B.S. in Physics in 1953 and from Northeastern University with a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering in 1972. Prior to Lew's position as Assistant and then Associate Director at the Harvard University Science Center, he was the head of the Electronics Group at the Harvard/MIT Cambridge Electron Accelerator. He started the computer group at the Science Center in 1975; when he finally retired,

he was Director of Computer Services for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. He and Margaret had been married for 52 years.

Lew had a wicked sense of humor. In the paragraph above, his footnotes to the asterisks read:

* UNIX is a trademark of Bell Laboratories, Inc.

** USENIX is not a trademark of Bell Laboratories, Inc.

After frustrations with AT&T lawyers about the UNIX manuals, Lew had announced in *login*, 30 April 1976, that he was “willing to undertake the task of duplicating and distributing the manuals for UNIX . . . The ‘UNIX PROGRAMMER’S MANUAL’ Sixth Edition dated May 1975 will be reproduced in its entirety.” Two years later, in March

1978, Lew announced the availability of the PWB [Programmer’s Workbench] manuals in four volumes (at \$26.50!).

Lew served on the USENIX Board of Directors until 1986, and he was active at meetings for another decade.

I (Lou Katz) have always considered Lew to be the rock upon which USENIX was built. I could always rely upon him to give clear and useful advice and not get entangled in the idiosyncrasies, personalities, or irrationalities of the players, and many times he helped me to get past/through/around ridiculous, annoying, or infuriating situations. I last saw Lew at a USENIX conference years ago, when his memory problems were weighing him down but hadn’t yet knocked him out.

We miss him.

CALLING ALL BLOGGERS

*Anne Dickison, Marketing Director,
USENIX*

USENIX is looking for experienced bloggers to contribute to the official USENIX blog. Everyone, from university students to blogging professionals, is encouraged to apply.

We’re looking for bloggers with experience in technical writing. We especially welcome those with expertise in system administration, software engineering, security, virtualization, green IT, file and storage systems, Web development, or cloud computing.

All participants will receive a discount on one conference of their choice, as well as the opportunity to post a bio link on the USENIX blog team bio page. Build your portfolio and help spread the word about the latest developments in systems computing.

To apply, please send usenixbloggers@usenix.org a technical writing sample and a brief statement telling us why you would like to be a part of the USENIX blogging team and two topic areas you would like to cover.

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