



MUUGlines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

Next Meeting: December 14, 2004: Migrating from Red Hat to Debian

Red Hat/Fedora has much to recommend it, but if you're looking to try and expand your horizons a bit, Debian's a good candidate to try!

Scott Balneaves, from Legal Aid Manitoba, will give a quick overview of installing Debian, the different "flavours" (i.e. stable, testing and unstable), and an overview of the commands and files you're used to on Red Hat, and where to find them on Debian, so you can get yourself kickstarted with a little less reading.

Where to find the Meeting

Meetings are held at the IBM offices at 400 Ellice Ave. (between Edmonton and Kennedy). When you arrive, you will have to sign in at the reception desk, and then wait for someone to take you up (in groups) to the meeting room. Please try to arrive by about 7:15pm, so the meeting can start promptly at 7:30pm. Don't be late or you may not get in.

Limited parking is available for free on the street, or in a lot across Ellice from IBM, for \$1.00 for the evening. Indoor parking is also available nearby, at Portage Place, for \$2.00 for the evening.

Mel Seder, 1944-2004

Sadly, on November 9th (the same evening as our last meeting was held), Mel Seder passed away at the age of 60. Our sympathies are with Mel's family and friends. Mel had been a MUUG member for several years, and was an enthusiastic supporter of Linux and Open Source. That enthusiasm was evident whenever

he wore his distinctive red fedora hat, which also made him easy to spot in a crowd. We'll miss him!



Mel's funeral took place at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, on November 11, 2004. Rabbi Chaya Green presided, and gave a beautiful eulogy. What follows are excerpts from that eulogy.

Mel leaves to mourn for him: Carole, his beloved wife of some 40 years; his children, Elaine and Evan, Leslie and Orin, and Michael; his grandchildren, Lexi and Ezzi; his brother and sister-in-law, Norm and Sheila; as well as numerous nephews, nieces, and other relatives. Mel passed away Tuesday night, tragically, at the age of 60.

I never had the opportunity to get to know Mel personally--something which, in light of the extraordinary life he lived, I regret. Born here in Winnipeg, in 1944, Mel got off to a rough start in life. Mel's mother died of cancer when he was just eight years old. His only memories of his mother were of her illness, and her inability to spend time with him.

After his mother's death, with his father committed to running a more-than-full-time business, Mel was raised by his two aunts, and his grandmother. When he was old enough, Mel returned to live with his father, but tragedy then struck again. His father died when Mel was barely twenty years old.

Only ten weeks after the death of his father, Mel bounced back, and married Carole. Their three children followed in rapid succession. Mel continued to run his father's business for some time. But in the end, he decided to sell the business, return to school, and become a Certified Management Accountant.

Mel was one of the early pioneers of computer literacy, and though he was completely self-taught, Mel became one of the first accountants in the city to combine the power of the computer with accounting. Mel also had the great satisfaction of teaching accounting at Red River College.

In spite of being seriously ill for the past seven years, Mel never identified with, nor allowed himself to be overcome by his disease. He never complained, never felt sorry for himself, and always put the needs of others first. He lived every day, and each minute of every day, to the fullest. For Mel, much more than for the rest of us, life was absolutely precious, and he made the most of every little bit of it.

Mel recovered from the blow of not being able to work, by developing new interests--painting, guitar playing, and becoming a Linux guru. As a matter of fact, Mel adopted Linux as one of his unique emblems, during what turned out to be the last phase of his life. One version of Linux, called Red Hat, inspired Mel so much that he actually bought a bright red fedora, and wore it wherever he went. In that hat, people could see Mel coming from a mile away--and he wouldn't have had it any other way.

Mel also had the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of, and affection for, The Grateful Dead. Like the free Linux computer operating system, The Grateful Dead are a symbol of real freedom. Moving counter to the major trends of our culture, The Grateful Dead

engaged in unrestrained giving, high achievement for its own sake, and indifference to material acquisitions--the very pursuits that made life truly worth living for Mel.

Mel had known for some time that he might not have very much longer to live. Further, he had no desire to die a lingering death in a hospital ward. So, Tuesday night, Mel's desire was fulfilled. He left this world on a high note, having just installed the latest release of Linux (Fedora Core 3); and having just attended a roast of Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz. Mel left this world all too soon. But if he didn't succeed in adding years to his life, Mel certainly succeeded in adding life to his years.

May the memory of Mel Seder -- Moshe Avraham Ben Eliezer -- prove to be a blessing, and inspiration to all who knew him.

Take My Song,... Please!

Those of you who read WIRED magazine, and particularly Lawrence Lessig's column, have probably already heard about Creative Commons (creativecommons.org), a non-profit organization that "offers a flexible range of protections and freedoms for authors and artists." It's an alternative to traditional copyright protection.

The November issue of WIRED features the WIRED CD, a collection of 16 songs that they encourage you to "Rip. Sample. Mash. Share." Didn't get a copy of the magazine or CD? Well, one copy will be given away as a door prize at our December 14th meeting. But you can also get MP3's of each track from the creativecommons.org web site. Share and enjoy! It's all legal in this case.

Artists featured on the CD include the Beastie Boys, David Byrne (front-man of the former Talking Heads), and Gilberto Gil (Brazil's minister of culture, and international pop star), among others (mostly of the rap/hip-hop/urban genre).

Multiplexed Optical Data Storage

Touted as a future replacement for DVD storage, Multiple Optical Data Storage (MODS) promises one terabyte capacity on a disc the same size as a DVD. According to a story at PhysOrg.com, “The 1TB disk would be double sided and dual layer, but even a single sided, single layer, MODS disk could hold the Lord of the Rings trilogy 13 times over, or all 238 episodes of Friends.”

“MODS disks will not be the first to challenge DVDs’ domination of the audiovisual optical disk market. BluRay disks, which have five times the capacity of a DVD at 25GB per layer, are expected to be released towards the end of 2005 for the home market.”

But don’t hold your breath waiting for this to happen, the article also mentions that MODS could be ready for market between 2010 and 2015, assuming funding allows further development.

You can read more about it here:

<http://www.physorg.com/news1333.html>

VMware on a Linux 2.6 Kernel?

According to the FC3 release notes, it can be done...

“VMware WS 4.5.2 is known to work on Fedora Core 3 after the following workarounds are used:

- You must upgrade the kernel modules and configuration using the unofficial vmware-any-any-* toolkit available from:

<http://platan.vc.cvut.cz/ftp/pub/vmware/>

- After vmware-config.pl is run and the VMware modules are loaded, the following command creates the /sys/class/* nodes needed for udev:

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cp -rp /dev/vm* /etc/udev/devices/
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(Source: <http://fedora.redhat.com/docs/release-notes/fc3/x86/>)

Xen Turns 2.0

The second major release of Xen, the open-source virtual machine monitor, has just been announced. Similar to VMware and Microsoft’s Virtual PC, Xen supports execution of multiple guest operating systems, but at much higher performance.

The higher performance is due to the approach the Xen team took. Instead of the usual method of dynamically fixing the guest to work properly, modifications are made to the guest, in the case the Linux kernel. The changes are small, and any Linux distribution should run fine on the resulting 2.4 or 2.6 kernel. Ports are under way for NetBSD, FreeBSD and Plan 9.

A port of Windows XP was completed for a previous version, but isn’t available for licencing reasons. Microsoft Research was an early supporter of the effort, but no longer.

The home page can be found at xen.sf.net, which redirects your browser to the Computer Laboratory of the University of Cambridge. Performance data can be found at

<http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/Research/SRG/netos/xen/performance.html>.

With the latest version announcement comes rumours that Novell and Red Hat will soon be supporting it.

From Computer Reseller News: “Steven Hand, of the University of Cambridge’s computer lab, said he expects the Red Hat drop will be available in the same time frame as Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4.0, which is due in the first quarter of 2005.”

“Red Hat will release test builds for Red Hat Fedora Core 3, and Novell will soon release test builds for Novell Suse Linux, Xen founder Ian Pratt said. The Xen components will be dropped into experimental Linux packages, but they won’t be commercially supported.”

The biggest challenge for this kind of program is the fact that the Intel architecture cannot completely “self-virtualize,” making necessary a variety of patching techniques and work-arounds which can severely hamper performance. The biggest difference in the two approaches is in I/O performance, where Xen shines.

An independent performance evaluation was done by a group at Clarkson University in a paper entitled Xen and the Art of Repeated Research (<http://www.clarkson.edu/class/cs644/xen/files/repeatedxen-usenix04.pdf>). An earlier paper by the Cambridge group can be found at <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=945462>.

In the new version’s press release, Ian Pratt states: “Xen 2.0 runs on almost the entire set of modern x86 hardware supported by Linux, and is easy to ‘drop-in’ to an existing Linux installation. The new release has a lot more flexibility in how guest OS virtual I/O devices are configured. For example, you can configure arbitrary firewalling, bridging and routing of guest virtual network interfaces, and use copy-on-write LVM volumes or loopback files for storing guest OS disk images. Another new feature is ‘live migration,’ which allows running OS images to be moved between nodes in a cluster without having to stop them.”

Thunderbird Nearing 1.0

Hot on the heels of the 1.0 release of the open-source browser Firefox, Scott MacGregor of Mozilla.org announces Thunderbird 1.0, Release Candidate 1. He writes: “I’m excited to announce that our first Thunderbird 1.0 Release Candidate is now available for testing. 1.0RC1 includes lots of bug fixes and improvements for features like saved search folders, the RSS reader, mail migration, and message grouping. The default themes have both been updated with new improved artwork as well.”

Among the many changes:

- Migration improvements for Outlook 2003, Eudora and Mozilla Suite users.
- Saved Search Folder Improvements (i.e. lots of bug fixes)
- Message Grouping Improvements (i.e. lots of bug fixes)
- Improved RSS support (i.e. lots of bug fixes)
- Improved support for Multiple Identities for an account.
- Improved Account Central for Windows and Linux
- Improvements to Global Inbox, in particular how we manage filters.

...and much more.

You can get the Release Candidate from <http://ftp.mozilla.org/pub/mozilla.org/thunderbird/releases/1.0rc/>

Sending Us E-Mail?

Due to the amount of e-mail MUUG receives, we’ve set up an auto-reply to give you immediate feedback, and redirect some of the e-mail to the appropriate places. Why not look at <http://www.muug.mb.ca/about.html#contacts> first?

Share Your Thoughts

E-mail us with your comments on the newsletter, whether it’s criticisms or commendations, and continue to send in articles or ideas for the same. Specifically, what sort of material you would rather see: Announcements, technical articles, new products, or...?

If you have a How-To or other idea, and aren’t ready to give a presentation at MUUG, an article is a great alternative! If you can write better than the editor, that’s terrific; if you can’t, submit it anyway and we’ll get it into shape for publication. We know that many of you have some great ideas and lots of knowledge. Why not share? Send Mail to: editor@muug.mb.ca.