

Tribute to Evi

Every field has an avatar who defines and embodies that space. For system administration, that person is Evi Nemeth.

This is the 5th edition of a book that Evi led as an author for almost three decades. Although Evi wasn't able to physically join us in writing this edition, she's with us in spirit and, in some cases, in the form of text and examples that have endured. We've gone to great efforts to maintain Evi's extraordinary style, candor, technical depth, and attention to detail.

An accomplished mathematician and cryptographer, Evi's professional days were spent (most recently) as a computer science professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. How system administration came into being, and Evi's involvement in it, is detailed in the last chapter of this book, *A Brief History of System Administration*.

Throughout her career, Evi looked forward to retiring and sailing the world. In 2001, she did exactly that: she bought a sailboat (*Wonderland*) and set off on an adventure. Across the years, Evi kept us entertained with stories of amazing islands, cool new people, and other sailing escapades. We produced two editions of this book with Evi anchoring as close as possible to shoreline establishments so that she could camp on their Wi-Fi networks and upload chapter drafts.

Never one to decline an intriguing venture, Evi signed on in June 2013 as crew for the historic schooner *Nina* for a sail across the Tasman Sea. The *Nina* disappeared shortly thereafter in a bad storm, and we haven't heard from Evi since. She was living her dream.

Evi taught us much more than system administration. Even in her 70s, she ran circles around all of us. She was always the best at building a network, configuring

a server, debugging a kernel, splitting wood, frying chicken, baking a quiche, or quaffing an occasional glass of wine. With Evi by your side, anything was achievable.

It's impossible to encapsulate all of Evi's wisdom here, but these tenets have stuck with us:

- Be conservative in what you send and liberal in what you receive.¹
- Be liberal in who you hire, but fire early.
- Don't use weasel words.
- Undergraduates are the secret superpower.
- You can never use too much red ink.
- You don't really understand something until you've implemented it.
- It's always time for sushi.
- Be willing to try something twice.
- Always use **sudo**.

We're sure some readers will write in to ask what, exactly, some of the guidance above really means. We've left that as an exercise for the reader, as Evi would have. You can hear her behind you now, saying "Try it yourself. See how it works."

Smooth sailing, Evi. We miss you.

1. This tenet is also known as Postel's Law, named in honor of Jon Postel, who served as Editor of the RFC series from 1969 until his death in 1998.