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by [Kevin Fu](#)

This issue focuses on the Linux operating system. While my computing experiences do not include punch cards or bubble memory, I can claim to have [*reluctantly*] installed an early version of Linux. In late 1993, a high school friend called me, saying excitedly, "Kevin, you have to try this new operating system called Linux!" Dare he suggest the erasure of my coveted DOS partition? After luring me with talk of OpenWindows in SLS Linux, he finally convinced me to install a rickety, version 0.9x operating system on my 386. A year and several revisions later, Linux became my primary operating system.

Linux is now one of the most popular free operating systems. Unlike your typical commercial operating system, Linux comes in several distributions. At the core of Linux is the kernel, the trusted intermediary that manages the low-level resources of the hardware. Linux distributions of various charters provide the additional functionality (e. g., programs in /bin) essential to a UNIX-like operating system. In this manner, Linux gives you the freedom to choose. If you want to change your window manager or shell, you can. If you want to modify your kernel, you simply edit the freely available kernel source code or create your own module. Many of these qualities generalize to other free operating systems such as the BSD flavors.

Linux has been a great help to me. Similarly, the authors in this issue discuss their experiences with Linux. *Caveat lector*, you might be lured into replacing that commercial operating system on your machine too.

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