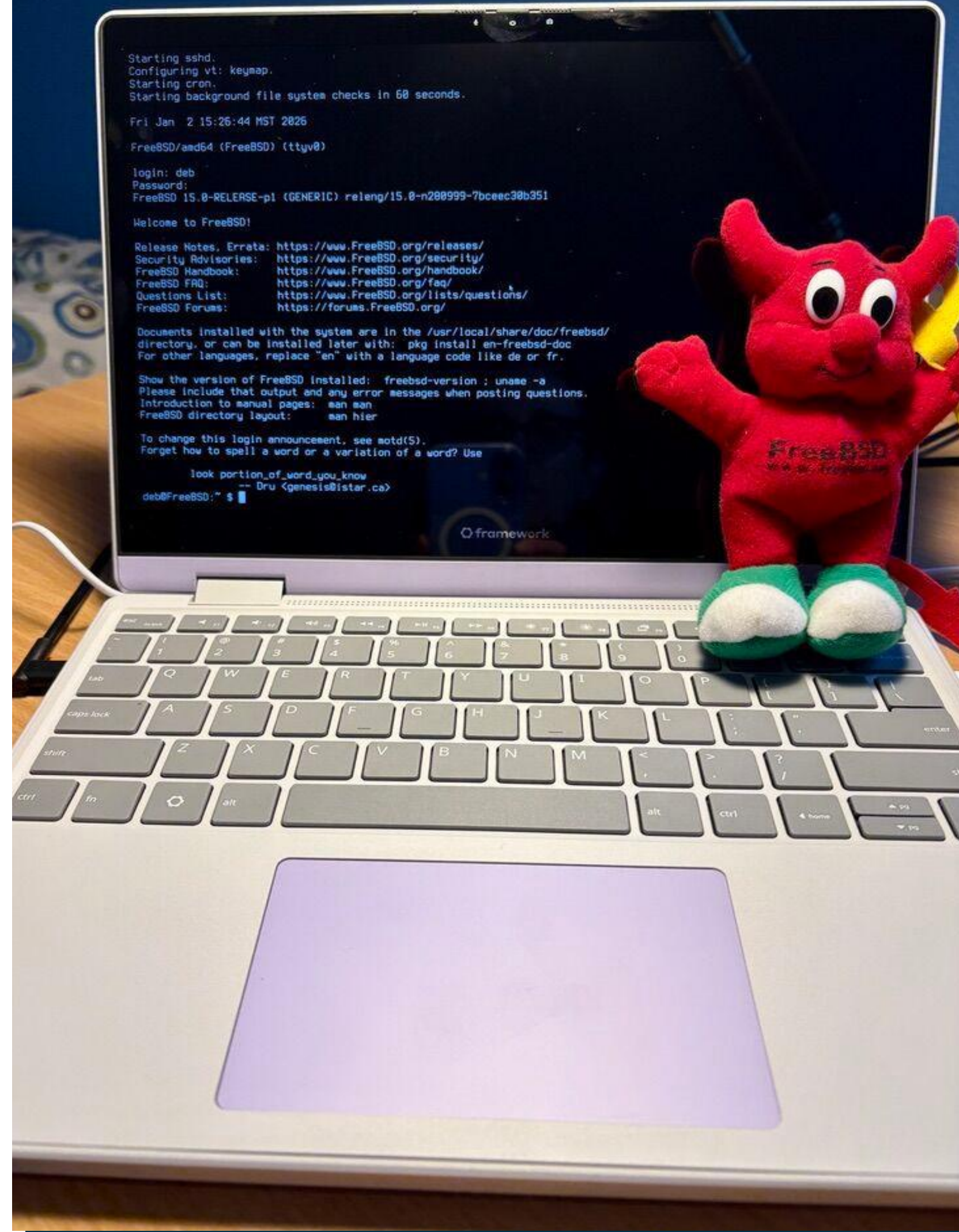


What Running FreeBSD on a Modern Laptop Taught Me



Running FreeBSD on a modern laptop





Who here has run FreeBSD on a server, desktop, or laptop?

Be honest, who got stuck right after the install?



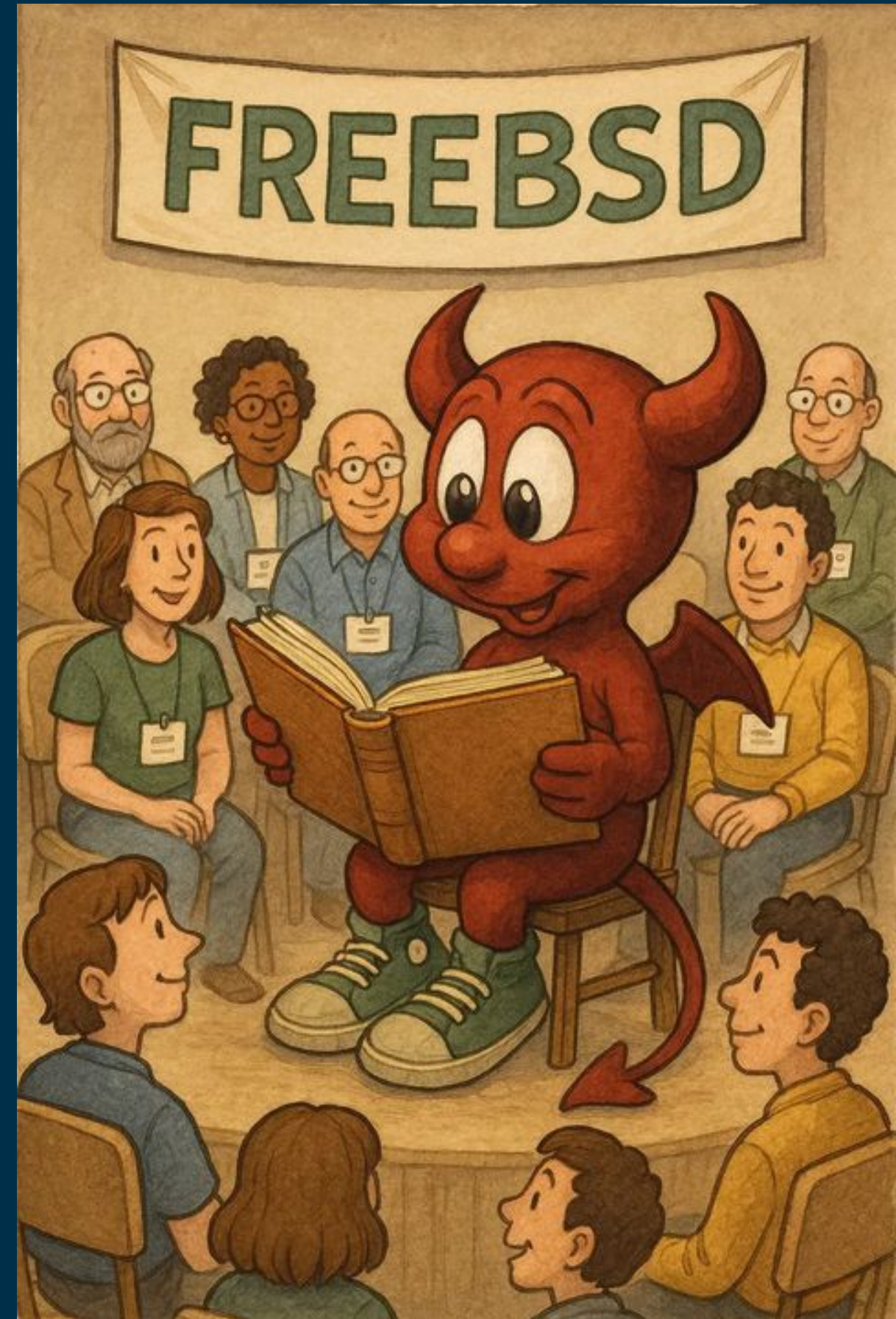
I'm Deb Goodkin, Executive Director of the FreeBSD Foundation.

My background is firmware engineering in storage. I'm not a kernel developer.

I wasn't a daily FreeBSD desktop user before this.

FreeBSD is Everywhere

Used by Sony, Apple, Netflix, NetApp, Juniper



The Problem **Wasn't** Installing FreeBSD.



*It was what came
after.*

Every time I installed FreeBSD, it felt like a mountain.

I'd get stuck on **what to do next.**

It was also time-consuming, and this wasn't my day job.

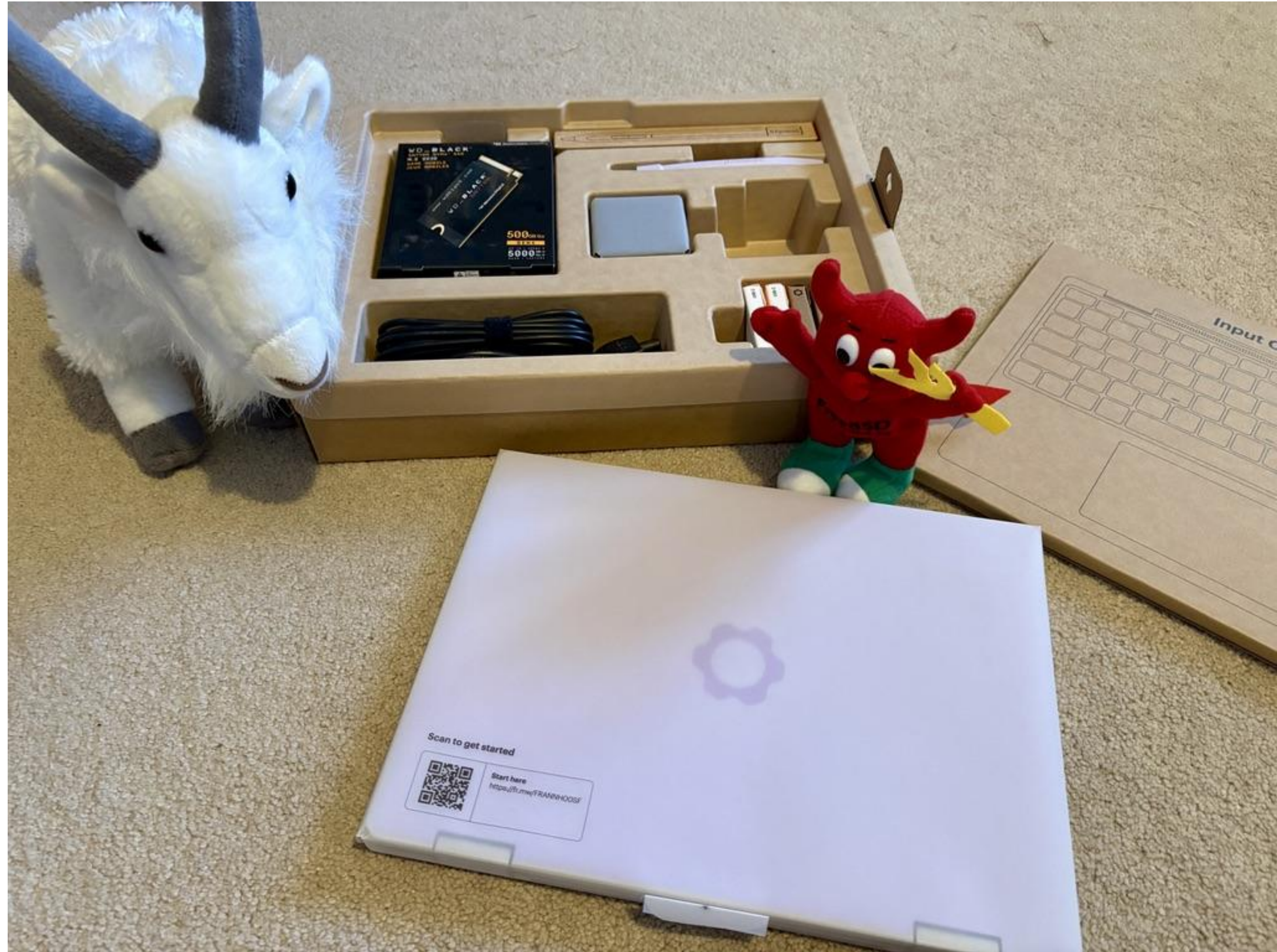
Work, running, dinner, sleep, life always took over.



The Journey



Unboxing Day!





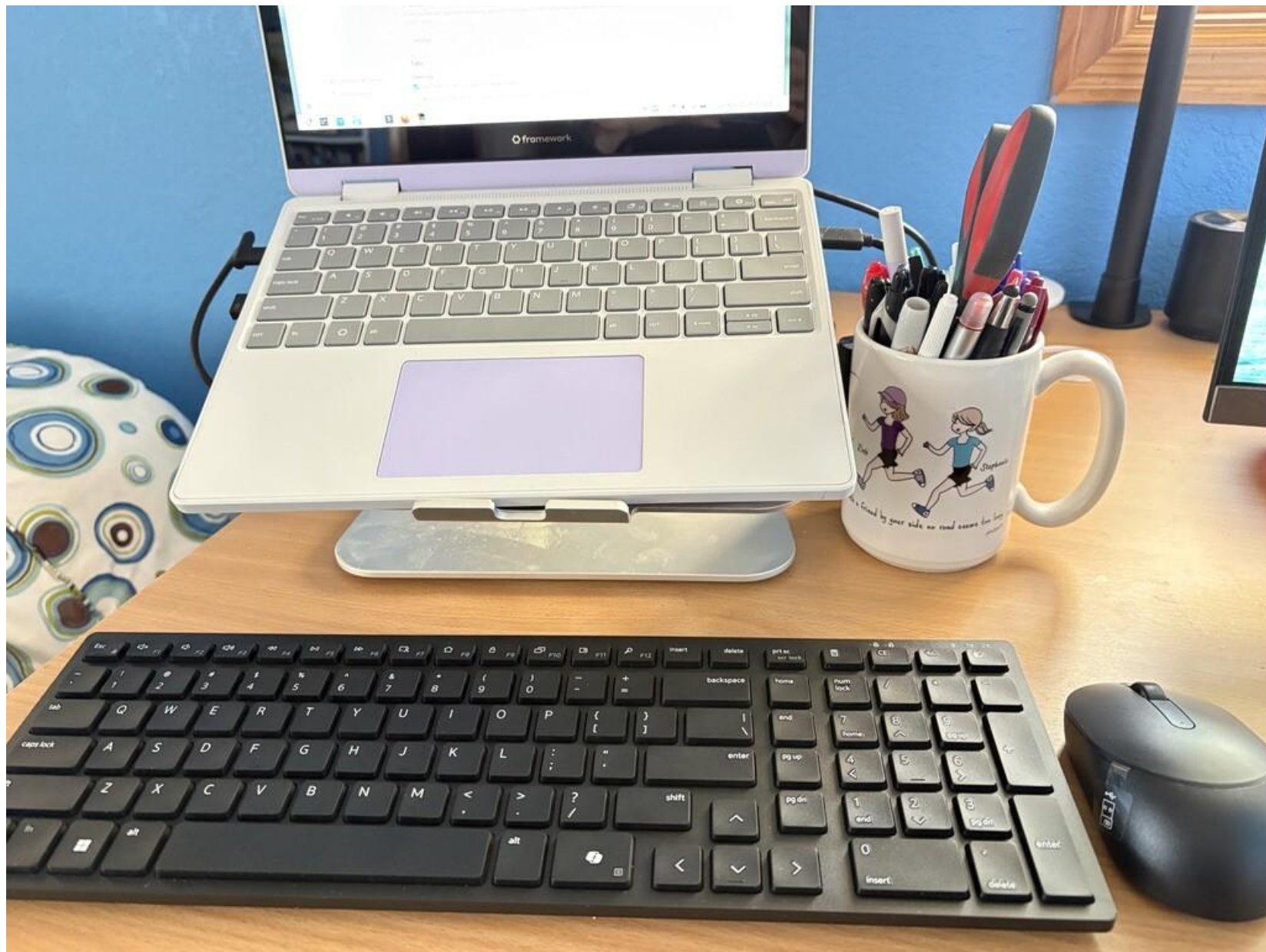
What Made This Time **Different**

*This time, I didn't just install FreeBSD.
I created a system for learning and success.*

- ✓ Clear goal: FreeBSD as my daily driver
- ✓ Daily habit: 10 minutes minimum
- ✓ Accountability: post the journey on LinkedIn

Some Things Just Worked!

Some of the “It Just Worked” moments for me were:



- ✓ Installed the KDE desktop and it worked!
There's a new desktop installer coming in 15.1.
- ✓ Wireless Mouse w/ a USB dongle worked instantly
- ✓ Touchscreen worked



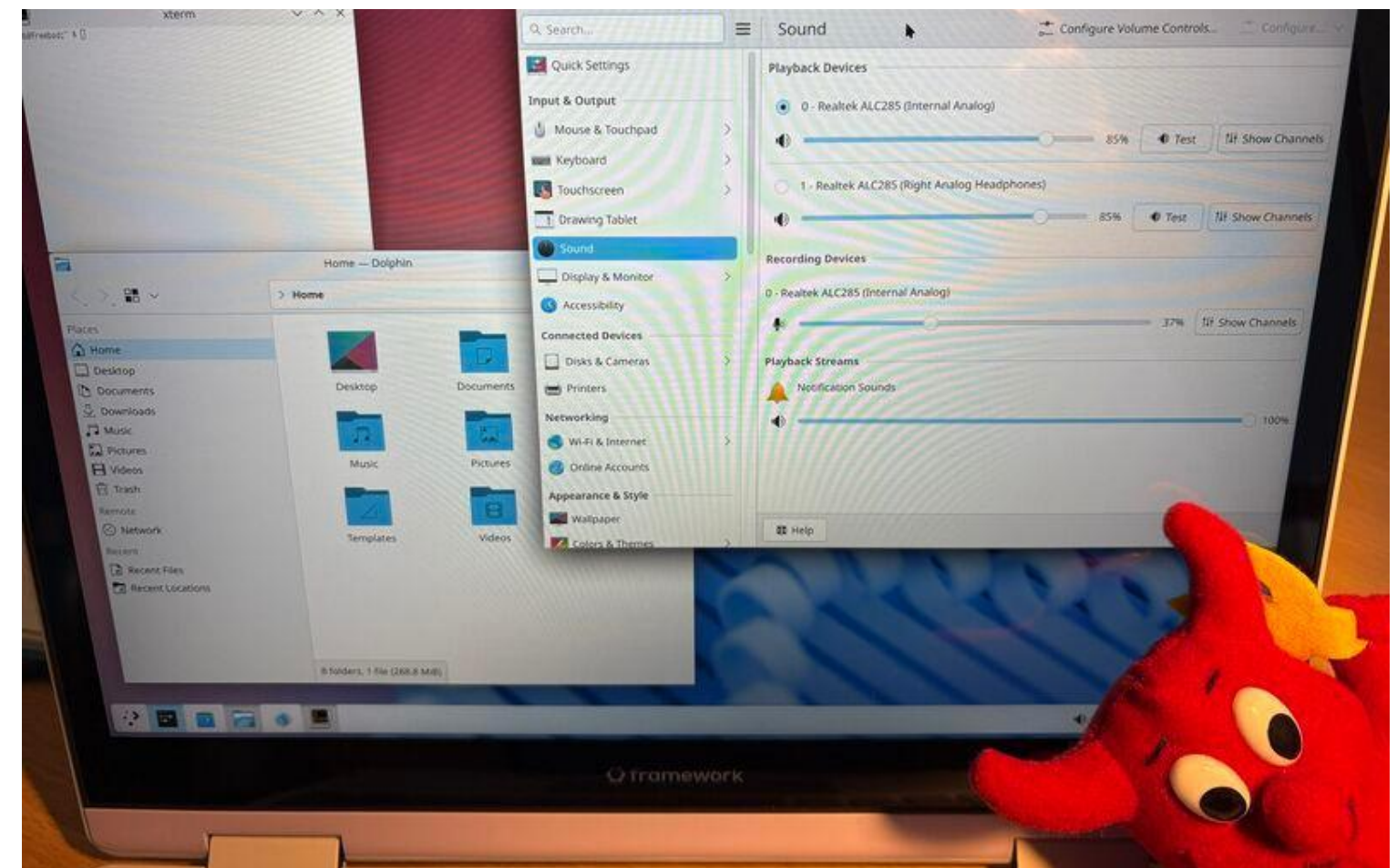
The Small Things Matter

Wi-Fi Failure

I skipped setting the date and time.

So, I couldn't update the firmware or install the latest Wi-Fi drivers. So, I had no Wi-Fi, which broke a chain of other things.

Lesson: Small things matter more than you think.



Things Didn't Always Just Work.

Welcome to FreeBSD



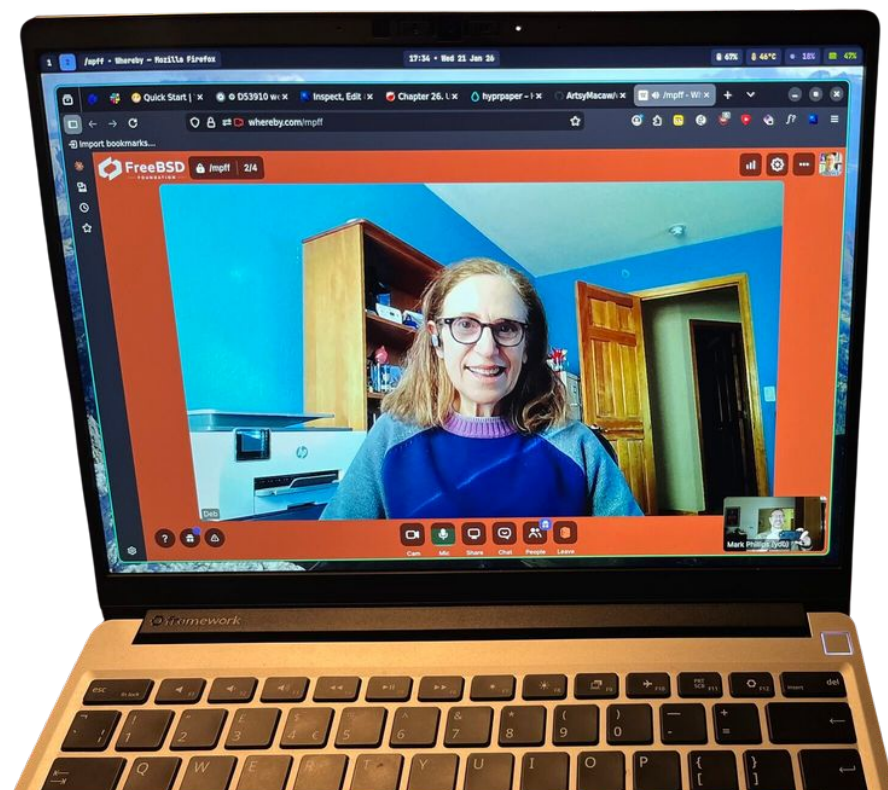
I ran into issues. I asked for help: forums, mailing lists, Reddit, Facebook, and Discord. People want to help.

Setbacks can be frustrating, but they are also opportunities to learn and grow.

WHAT TO DO NEXT (SYSTEMS)

I asked myself: how do I actually use my computer on a typical workday?

- Documents · Email · Browser
- Video calls · Printing · External monitor

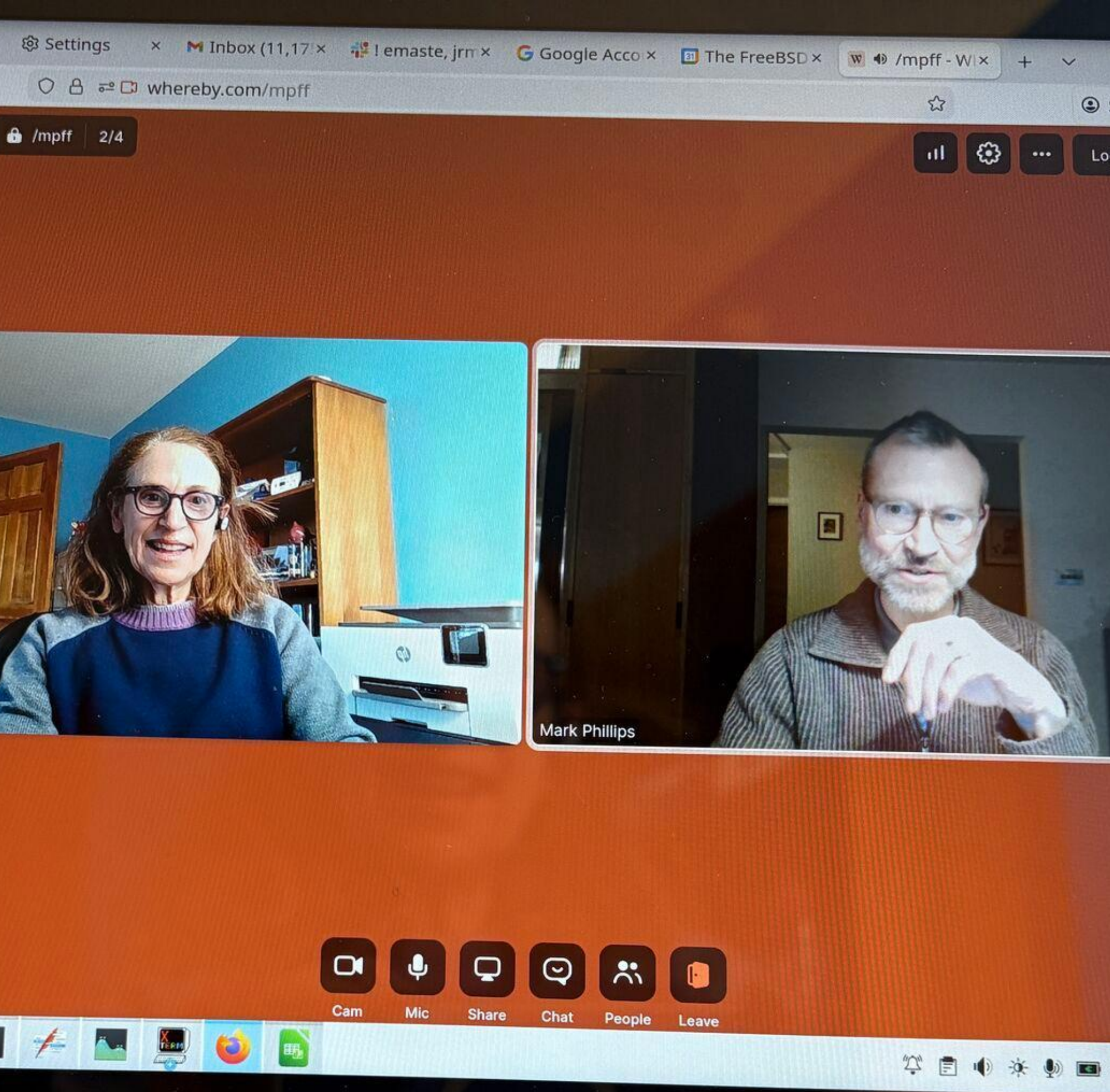


Boot Environments

- Key to learning and experimenting!
- Try something and revert if it fails!



A presentation slide for FreeBSD Boot Environments. The background is red. In the top right corner is the FreeBSD logo (a red dragon head) and the text "freeBSD". The main title "FREEBSD BOOT ENVIRONMENTS" is written in a large, white, distressed font. Below the title, there are three stacks of dark red cylinders representing boot environments. The left stack has two cylinders labeled "Snapshot 1". The middle stack has four cylinders labeled "Data (A)", "Snapshot 1", "Data Changes (B)", and "Snapshot 2". The right stack has four cylinders labeled "Data (A)", "Snapshot 1", "Data Changes (B)", and "Snapshot 2". In the bottom left corner, the text "SHERIDAN COMPUTERS" is written in a white, stylized font. In the bottom right corner, a man in a black t-shirt is pointing upwards with his right hand.



A daily driver only counts if you can do the day-to-day

For me, that's meetings.

- **Zoom:** failed at first. Eventually got it working.
- **Headset:** worked.
- **Webcam:** worked, once I learned how to enable it.
- **Google Meet:** works.
- **Teams:** partially works.

TONS OF RESOURCES TO LEARN FROM

I stopped trying to learn everything... and started learning what I needed, when I needed it.

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FreeBSD Handbook

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[Split HTML / Single HTML]

Abstract

Welcome to FreeBSD! This handbook covers the installation and day to day use of *FreeBSD 15.0-RELEASE*, *FreeBSD 14.4-RELEASE* and *13.5-RELEASE*. This book is the result of ongoing work by many individuals. Some sections might be outdated. Those interested in helping to update and expand this document should send email to the [FreeBSD documentation project mailing list](#).

The latest version of this book is available from the [FreeBSD web site](#). Previous versions can be obtained from <https://docs.FreeBSD.org/doc/>. The book can be downloaded in a variety of formats and compression options from the [FreeBSD download server](#) or one of the numerous [mirror sites](#). Searches can be performed on the handbook and other documents on the [search page](#).

Last modified on: December 31, 2025 by [Ganbold Tsagaankhuu](#)

FreeBSD Handbook

what should I learn about freebsd today as a daily driver on my laptop?

Since you're using FreeBSD as a daily driver (and given your long-term sustainability lens), I'd suggest learning something that increases both **independence** and **systems-level understanding** — not just another surface tweak.

Here are three high-leverage options. Pick one based on your mood today:

1 Deepen Your Understanding of the Boot Process

Learn how FreeBSD actually gets from power-on to your desktop.

Explore:

- `loader`
- `/boot/loader.conf`

ChatGPT prompt



A Powerful, Open Source
Operating System

Download FreeBSD 15.0

[amd64](#) [aarch64](#) [other](#)

[announcement](#), [notes](#)

Native ZFS

OpenZFS combines the roles of a filesystem and volume manager into a single, reliable storage platform. In FreeBSD, it is fully integrated into the operating system.



Virtualization

bhyve is FreeBSD's modern hypervisor, with support for virtio, PCI passthrough, and fast NVMe emulation.



Jails

FreeBSD jails provide isolation for services and applications. Each jail can run with its own filesystem, networking, and configuration.



Networking

FreeBSD is widely recognized for its network performance and stability. It powers infrastructure that handles demanding workloads around the world.



Documentation

FreeBSD includes extensive, well-maintained documentation. From the Handbook to manual pages, documentation is treated as a core part of the system.



Community

FreeBSD has a vibrant and collaborative community, from individual contributors to large corporate organisations. Groups are active across various channels, from real-time



THE BIGGER REALIZATION + LESSONS LEARNED



You don't have to be deeply technical

Failure is part of the process. You learn from mistakes.

Develop your own system that will break down and simplify the steps to be successful. It's your own journey.

This wasn't just a FreeBSD journey. It changed how I approach learning.

Welcome

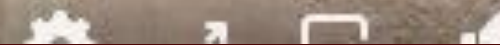
1. Boot Multi user
2. Boot Single user
3. Escape to loader
4. Reboot

Options:

5. Kernel: default
6. Boot Options



19/11/17



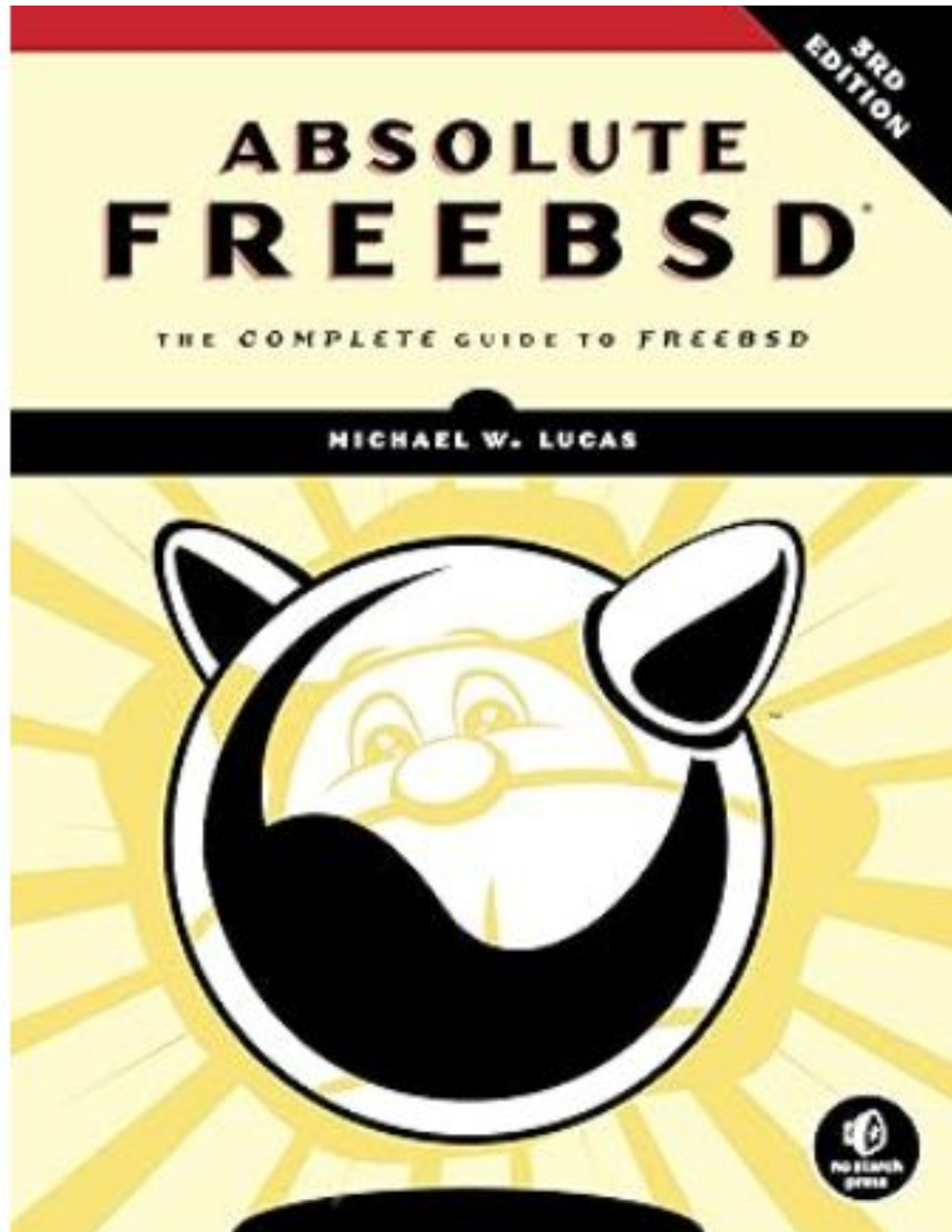


**Go Take
the First
Step!**

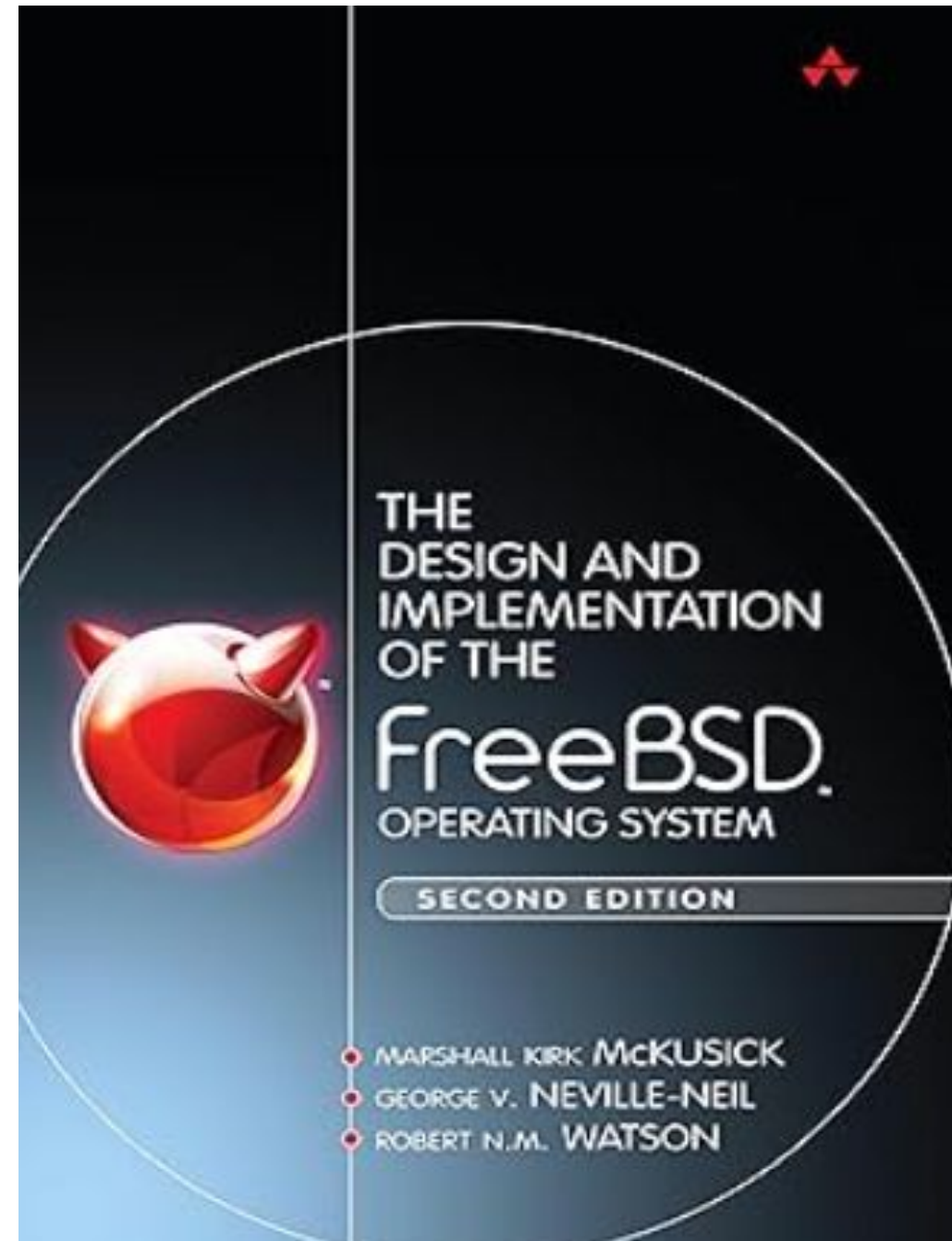
```
1. Boot
2. Boot Single user
3. Escape to loader prompt
4. Reboot

Options:
5. Kernel: default/kernel (1 of 1)
6. Boot Options
```

Resources



Absolute FreeBSD — by Michael W. Lucas



The Design and Implementation of the FreeBSD Operating System – by Marshall McKusick, George Neville-Neil, Robert Watson

<https://docs.freebsd.org/en/books/handbook/bsdinstall/>
Installing FreeBSD (Desktop & Virtual Machines)

Getting Started with FreeBSD — FreeBSD Foundation