April 12th

Evelyn Berezin

(pronounced BEAR-a-zen)

Born: April 12, 1925;

The Bronx, NYC
Died: Dec. 8, 2018

In 1969 Berezin founded Redactron Corp., and in Sept. 1971 released what many consider to be the first electronic word processor, the "Data Secretary".

It was about the size of a small refrigerator, and some 40 inches high. Internally it used 13 semiconductor chips, some of which Berezin had designed herself. An IBM Selectric typewriter [July 31] acted as the keyboard and printer, with cassette tape drives to record and play back what had been typed, allowing it to be edited. The original model lacked a monitor, but one was soon added.

The nearest equivalent at the time was the IBM MT/ST [June 29], which also employed a Selectric typewriter and magnetic tape recording, but relied on relay switches rather than chips.

Redactron sold some 10,000 machines, and by 1975 employed just under 500 people. In 1976, Berezin was named one of the US's top leaders by "Business Week" magazine.

Before founding Redactron, Berezin had worked at Teleregister, where she designed a passenger reservations system on a UNIVAC Model 1 [March 31] in 1962 for United Airlines, making it one of the largest systems of the time. (It became operational almost a year before the better-known SABRE [Nov 5].)

It served 60 cities across the country, with a one second response time, and a spotless record of no system failures during its 11 years of service.

Univac improved the reservation system throughout the 1960's, making it a leader in the field. Many airlines bought this and later versions (British European Airways (BEA), Northwest Airlines MN, Scandinavian Airlines, Iberia, Lufthansa, etc.). For example, the BEA system could handle more than 10 transactions per second and was connected to all the airline's reservation offices in Europe.

Other projects carried out by Berezin at Teleregister included an automated banking system, a weapons-targeting calculator, and betting terminals for horse racing.

Herbert Jeffrey "Herbie" Hancock

Born April 12, 1940;

Chicago, Illinois

Hancock is one of the most significant figures in jazz, as a pianist, composer, and bandleader. In May 1963, he was invited to join Miles Davis' second great quintet which went on to define jazz's post-bop era.

Before all that, at 16, he entered Grinnell College in Iowa on a scholarship to major in electrical engineering, fulfilling a promise he'd made his mother to learn a trade. However, as a sophomore, he organized the school's first jazz concert and, as a junior, added music as a second major.

Arguably his knowledge of EE was useful later, when he began experimenting with electronic jazz fusion.

Alexander "Sandy" Bruen Trevor

Born: April 12, 1945;

NYC

Trevor built the CompuServe CB Simulator, the first commercial multi-user chat system, which went live on [Feb 21] 1980. It soon became CompuServe's [Sept 24] most popular service.

He and Vint Cerf [June 23] were responsible for the first commercial email system linkage between CompuServe and MCI Mail [Sept 23], and he conceived the CompuServe GIF Protocol [June 15], which Steve Wilhite subsequently implemented.

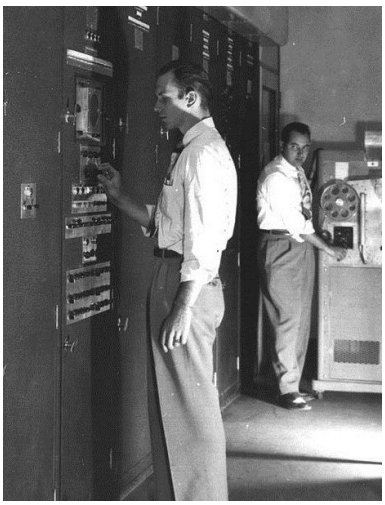
Somehow he's also found the time to climb all 46 peaks in the Adirondacks that are over 4000 feet high, and is a FAA-certified commercial pilot.

Building the EDVAC

April 12, 1946

Prev: [Sept 30]

J. Presper Eckert [April 9] and John Mauchly [Aug 30] signed a contract to create a preliminary version of the EDVAC (Electronic Discrete Variable Computer). This prototype would be used to determine the feasibility of a full-scale version.



The EDVAC at the Ballistic Research Lab. US Army Photo.

Unfortunately, the work was severely affected by Eckert and Mauchly's on-going dispute with the Moore school over the patent rights to the ENIAC, which had caused them to resign on [March 31] 1946.

However, before they left in September, they finished a detailed design, but their

departure, along with a slew of their engineers, meant that progress slowed and costs spiraled upwards. Historically, this means that although the EDVAC was the first computer *designed* to utilize the "stored-program" concept, it wasn't the first to be *implemented*.

The EDVAC eventually employed almost 6,000 vacuum tubes and 12,000 diodes, with a memory capacity of 1,000 44-bit words. It consumed 56 kW of power, covered 490 ft^2 of floor space and weighed 17,300 lb.

It was delivered to the Ballistics Research Lab in Maryland in August 1949. However, there were many problems with reliability, and a further 18 months were spent solving those issues. As a result, the EDVAC is generally considered to have become operational in late 1951, and run its first production program on Jan. 28, 1952.

The dates are important when assigning the honors of the first machines to *implement* von Neumann's stored program concept, which can be ordered like so:

- Manchester Baby ([June 21], 1948);
- BINAC ([April 4], 1949);
- EDSAC ([May 6], 1949);
- CSIR Mark 1 (Nov 24, 1949) [March 5];
- EDVAC (1951).

The EDVAC was primarily used for ballistic and satellite calculations. It was decommissioned in Jan. 1963.

David Harel

Born: April 12, 1950;

London, England

Harel has worked on dynamic logic, database theory, the modeling of biological systems, but may be best known for his invention of statecharts for specifying and programming reactive systems, which later became part of the UML standard [Feb 27].

Harel and Amir Pnueli [April 22] also developed the Statemate system, the first commercial software engineering tool for reactive systems, and he and W. Damm co-invented live sequence charts.

More exotically, he's also proposed a system for odor communication and synthesis, and considered its application to the Turing test [Oct 00]. For more on odor production, see [Aug 5].

Amstrad CPC 464

April 12, 1984

The CPC 464 was Amstrad's first home computer, and quickly became a bestseller, with more than two million units sold in Europe. It helped turn Amstrad into one of the top computer companies in the UK. The business had been founded in 1968 by Alan Sugar at the age of 21, and the name was a contraction of "Alan Michael Sugar Trading".

An Amstrad CPC464. Photo by Rama. CC BY-SA 2.0 fr.

The CPC 464 was powered by an Zilog Z80 [March 9], running at 4 MHz,, with 64 K of RAM, and those two numbers became the numerical part of the machine's name. The "CPC" stood for "Colour Personal Computer", a reference to its color display. Indeed, what set the CPC 464 apart from other home PCs of the time was its good graphics and sound production, which made it a great platform for gaming.

The machine ran AMSDOS, Amstrad's own OS, but it could also handle CP/M [June 22] which appealed more to business users.

Gates in the USSR

April 12, 1990

Bill Gates [Oct 28] visited Moscow to celebrate the first officially localized Russian edition of MS-DOS [Aug 12], version 4.01. On the previous day he had been photographed standing in front of the Kremlin with a MS-DOS box in his hands.

Perhaps today was chosen because it's also "Cosmonautics Day", which celebrates the first manned space flight made by Yuri Gagarin in 1961.

This wasn't the first Microsoft visit to the USSR. In Feb. 1989, the Russian company Dialog had hosted a conference in the "Hall of Columns" in Moscow's "House of Unions" (scene of Stalin's show trials of the 1930s). Microsoft senior vice president for international operations, Jeremy Butler, was on hand. Happily, Butler wasn't purged at that time, but resigned in a more conventional manner on June 30, 1991.

Pink OS

April 12, 1991

John Sculley [April 6], CEO of Apple, demonstrated the company's experimental Pink OS running on an IBM PS/2 Model 70 [April 2], which made the machine appear to be a Mac running System 7 [May 13]. Pink was going to be a completely new object-oriented OS for PCs built on top of a new microkernel.

The name came from the color of the index cards used during an early brainstorming session. Ideas that were simple to implement were written on blue cards, those that might take longer were on pink cards, and "far out" ideas were banished to red cards.

On July 3, IBM signed a letter of intent agreeing to assist in the development of Pink, and also licensed its RISC processor to Apple for use in the PowerPC [Oct 2]. Pink eventually became Taligent, and then eventually died. [Oct 2].

First Commercial Spam

April 12, 1994

The first commercial spam [March 31] was posted to at least 5500 USENET newsgroups [Jan 29] by two lawyers, Laurence Canter and Martha Siegel, to advertize their services prior to an upcoming "Green Card Lottery." It occurred shortly after the National Science Foundation had lifted its unofficial ban on commercial speech on the Internet.

The reaction by the USENET community was far from positive; the law firm's ISP, "Internet Direct", received so many complaints over the next two days that its mail servers crashed repeatedly. The harried ISP responded by terminating Canter and Siegel's account, causing them to lose around 25,000-50,000 emails

It also persuaded Arnt Gulbrandsen to start building "cancelbots" to post out third-party cancel USENET messages. These were first unleashed a few within minutes after Canter and Siegel's second spam post in June, this time to around 1000 newsgroups.

Unfortunately, later that year the lawyers claimed to have obtained 1,000 new clients through their ads and "made $100,000 off an ad that cost them only pennies." They even wrote a book about it, entitled "How to Make a Fortune on the Information Superhighway". Legions of spammers were dutifully inspired by their words of wisdom.

In 1997 the Supreme Court of Tennessee disbarred their law firm in part for taking part in illegal advertising practices.

PediSedated

April 12, 1996

Geoffrey Hart of the Albert Einstein Healthcare Network filed a patent (US 5697363 A) which would later be commercialized as the PediSedate, a headset that a child put on just before they were admitted to surgery. The device was connected to a Game Boy or portable CD player to allow the person to play games or listen to music.

It also included a snorkel-like attachment that was placed over the child's nose. Nitrous oxide, an anesthetic gas, was then pumped through the snorkel to put the child to sleep prior to the operation.

There was no feedback link between the game and the snorkel. For example, the nitrous dosage was not dictated by how well the child played the game.

Yahoo!'s IPO

April 12, 1996

Prev: [March 2] Next: [April 25]

The rise in the value of the shares offered in Yahoo!'s [March 2] IPO, rocketing the company's value to $1.1 billion overnight. They had started at $13 a share, later trading for as much as $43, before settling back down to $33 by the market's close. This was the second-highest first-day gain in NASDAQ [Feb 8] history.

Over the following months and years, the rise continued, reaching an all-time high of $118.75 a share on Jan. 3, 2000. However, following the bursting of the dot-com bubble [March 10], they plummeted to a low of $8.11 on Sept. 26, 2001.