## Peter Jay Weinberger
Born: Aug. 6, 1942;

Pennsylvania (??)

Alfred Aho [Aug 9], Weinberger, and Brian Kernighan [Jan 1] developed the AWK language (he's the "W") in 1977, which was first distributed in UNIX Version 7. The acronym is pronounced in the same way as the "auk " bird, which also acts as the language's emblem. In 1985 they extended the language, most significantly by adding user-defined functions. This version is sometimes called "new awk" or nawk.

When Weinberger was promoted to be the head of Computer Science Research at Bell Labs [Jan 1], his picture was merged with the AT&T "death star" logo of the mid-80s. This image has appeared on T-shirts, coffee mugs, CDs, and on at least one water tower (during the night of Sept. 16, 1985).
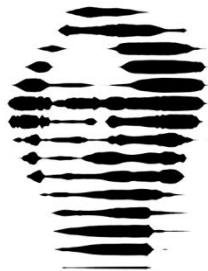

PJW Logo. Tom Duff.

Jonathan Bruce Postel
Born: Aug. 6, 1943;

Altadena, California
Died: October 16, 1998

Postel made significant contributions to the development of the Internet, particularly with respect to the standards written in the Request for Comment (RFC [April 1]) document series, which he edited for almost three decades.

Postel created the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) to assign network addresses to machines, and helped create SRI's Network Information Center (NIC [March 2]), which made those addresses available over the network.

As the Internet grew, Postel and Paul Mockapetris [Nov 18] created the Domain Name Service (DNS), which delegated the responsibility of assigning addresses to distributed name servers.
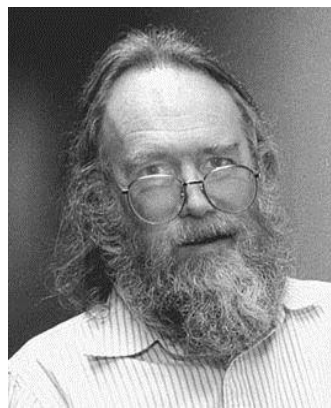
Jon Postel (1994). Photo by Irene Fertik, USC News Service.

Postel's law is "Be conservative in what you do; be liberal in what you accept from others." It comes from RFC 761 , where he summarized desirable interoperability criteria for the Internet

Postel attended the same high school (Van Nuys in Los Angeles) as two other Internet pioneers, Steve Crocker [Oct 15] and Vint Cerf [June 23].

The Economist called him, "the Heavenly Father of the Internet," perhaps because of his luxurious, flowing beard and habit of wearing sandals.

Oldest Software
Aug. 6, 1958

When the US Dept. of Defense Reorganization Act was signed into law on this day, part of it required the creation of a management system for tracking contracts and payments to vendors. MOCAS (Mechanization of Contract Administration Services) went operational sometime later in 1958, and is still running today.

MOCAS was probably first coded in FLOW-MATIC [May 2], but was soon ported to COBOL [April 8]. Since those halcyon punch cards days, MOCAS has been updated numerous times. For example, the current system has a glorious Web interface, and a user can even attach a Word document to a record.

In its present form the system manages roughly $1.3 trillion in obligations and 340,000 contracts. It runs on an IBM 2098 model E-10 mainframe, that can carry out 398 million instructions per second.

There have been several attempts to replace MOCAS, but they've floundered due to cost, complexity, and transition planning.

Other contenders for oldest software include the SABRE Airline Reservation System [Nov 5], and the IRS Individual Master File (IMF) and Business Master File (introduced in 1962–63). As much as 20 million lines of the IMF's code is reportedly written in assembler specific to the IBM System/360 architecture [April 7].

As of 2024, Guiness World Records considers IMF (or perhaps SABRE) to be the oldest software system in continual use.

The WWW Virtual Library
Aug. 6, 1991

The WWW Virtual Library (`http://vlib.org/`) is the oldest Web directory, able to trace its venerable heritage back to Tim Berners-Lee's [June 8] WWW overview page [next entry] at CERN. The site is currently run by volunteers who compile pages of links for particular areas in which they are expert.

The first really successful directory page was probably Jerry Yang [Nov 6] and David Filo's Yahoo! [March 2], which began in 1994.

Web Summary and First Pages
Aug. 6, 1991

Tim Berners-Lee [June 8] posted the first public summary of his World Wide Web project to the alt.hypertext USENET [Jan 29] newsgroup. It begins:

"The WorldWideWeb (WWW) project aims to allow links to be made to any information anywhere. [...] The WWW project was started to allow high energy physicists to share data, news, and documentation. We are very interested in spreading the web to other areas, and having gateway servers for other data. Collaborators welcome!"

The post included an FTP site address (info.cern.ch) where the code for a Web server, the Line Mode Browser [next entry], and the WorldWideWeb NeXT browser/editor could be found and downloaded. There was also a URL [Dec 25]: `http://info.cern.ch/hypertext/WWW/TheProject.html`. These Web pages were restored by CERN in 2013, reconstructed from a backup made on Nov. 3 1992. None of them have any pictures, since the first web image only appeared on [July 18] 1992.

For the official birthday of the Web, see [March 12].

Line Mode Browser
Aug. 6, 1991

The first browser was Tim Berners-Lee's WorldWideWeb [Dec 25], but it only worked on NeXT computers [Sept 18], which were fairly rare beasties. This was remedied by the second browser, the Line Mode Browser, which could run on almost anything: UNIX, VMS, VM/CMS, MVS, and any PC with an installed sockets library.

It was written in early 1991 by Nicola Pellow. She had joined the WWW Project in November 1990, taking a break from her undergraduate math degree.

The "Line Mode" name refers to the fact that the program only displayed text, and only supported line-by-line text input (i.e. there was no cursor positioning). These restrictions meant it could work across a wide range of terminals, including Teletypes [April 00].

The browser was initially released to a limited CERN audience (mostly the High-Energy Physics community) in March 1991, running on the VAX, RS/6000 and Sun-4. It was announced to the general public on this day [previous entry] via the alt.hypertext newsgroup.

Nicola Pellow with Tim Berners-Lee. Photo by CERN.

The first graphical UNIX browsers, ViolaWWW [March 9] and Erwise [April 15], appeared early in 1992.

Pellow left CERN at the end of August 1991, but returned after graduating in 1992, to work with Robert Cailliau [Jan 26] on MacWWW, the first browser for the Mac.

CERN released a simulated version of the Line Mode Browser in 2013 that runs in any browser (`http://line-mode.cern.ch/www/hypertext/WWW/TheProject.html`). It starts by loading the first Web page ever published [Dec 25].

Microsoft Invests in Apple
Aug. 6, 1997

Prev: [Dec 6]

After 18 months of losses, "sad face" Apple was rescued when Microsoft bought 100,000 non-voting shares in the company, worth $150 million. Microsoft also "donated" an undisclosed amount to the ailing company, estimated at well over $500 million.

One condition was that Apple had to drop its long-running court cases over look-and-feel [March 17], and QuickTime [Dec 6]. Internet Explorer [Aug 16] became the default browser on the Mac, and Microsoft kindly agreed to continue supporting MS Office [Aug 1] on the Mac for another five years.

Steve Jobs [Feb 24] joined the Apple board of directors as the de facto head of the company [Sept 16] along with Larry Ellison [Aug 17] of Oracle. The deal was announced by Jobs at the Macworld Expo in Boston, with Bill Gates [Oct 28] making an ominous "big brother"-like appearance on a large video screen behind Jobs. Jobs was not dressed for a marathon nor carrying a sledgehammer [Jan 22].

The Hutter Prize
Aug. 6, 2006

The Hutter Prize rewards the data compression of human knowledge as represented by a text file holding the first 1,000,000,000 characters from a specific version of the English Wikipedia [Jan 15].

Marcus Hutter announced the prize on this day with a smaller text file consisting of just 100MB, but it was increased to 1GB on Feb. 21, 2020. The cash award was also enlarged, from 50,000 to 500,000 Euros. The competition is currently

organized by Hutter, Matt Mahoney, and Jim Bowery.

The prize award amount is based on how well the submitted compressor improves upon the current record. There must also be a decompressor which restores the original file within specified time and memory constraints.

Alexander Ratushnyak is the current record holder with a compressor that reduced the 1GB file by 8.58% on July 4, 2019, taking a mere 23 hours to finish.

CDE is Freed
Aug. 6, 2012

The Common Desktop Environment (CDE) was a desktop environment based on the Motif widget toolkit for UNIX [Oct 15] and OpenVMS [Oct 25]. Hewlett-Packard, IBM, SunSoft, and Unix System Labs had announced CDE back in June 1993 as a joint development within their Common Open Software Environment (COSE) initiative. During the 1990's it became the standard desktop on most UNIX workstations.

However, other desktop environments, such as GNOME [March 3] and KDE [Oct 14] , improved rapidly, and became increasingly popular along with Linux [March 14]. Since CDE was a proprietary solution, it never made it over to Linux.

In 2006, a petition was created asking The Open Group (the entity in charge of CDE since 1996 [Feb 14]) to release the source code for CDE and Motif under a free license.

CDE was set free on this day, but it was only when the underlying Motif widget toolkit was also released under a LGPL license on Oct. 23, 2012 that CDE could call itself truly, completely free and open source [Feb 3]. Hallelujah!