

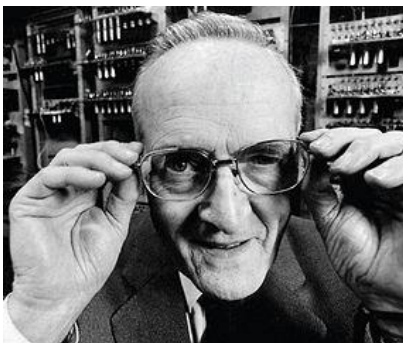
## August 11th

### Tom Kilburn

**Born: Aug. 11, 1921;**

Dewsbury, Yorkshire  
Died: Jan. 17, 2001

Freddie Williams [June 26] and Kilburn developed the Williams-Kilburn Tube [Dec 11] and, needing a test-rig for their device, built the world's first stored-program computer, the Manchester Baby (or more formally, the Small-Scale Experimental Machine, SSEM) [June 21]. It was said, probably erroneously, that the only program Kilburn ever wrote was for the Baby - 17 lines to calculate the highest proper factor of  $2^{18}$ .



Tom Kilburn. Photo by Carolyn Djanogly. CACM magazine.

A succession of innovative Manchester computers followed the Baby, including the Manchester Mark 1 [June 16], the Ferranti Mark 1 [Feb 12], and the Atlas [Dec 7], one of the first time-sharing multiprocessing computers. It incorporated job scheduling, spooling, interrupts, pipelining and paging.

Kilburn was also a gifted administrator, and instrumental in forming the University of Manchester's School of Computer Science in 1964, and was its first head.

Kilburn had first met Williams during WWII when he had been assigned to Williams' research team at the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE) at Malvern. The group soon

gained a reputation as a think-tank and problem-solver for radar, and anything else involving electronics. They were based in a single room in Malvern College's cricket pavilion.

Kilburn later claimed that watching Manchester United win the 1968 European cup at Wembley was the best day of his life (they beat Benfica, 4:1).

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### Patrick Joseph McGovern;

often referred to as "Uncle Pat"  
**Born: Aug. 11, 1937;**

Queens, New York City  
Died: March 19, 2014

In 1964 McGovern co-founded the International Data Group (IDG), which grew into a publishing empire that at one time published 200 magazines a year, operated 460 websites, and organized 700 events (including Macworld) in 79 countries.

McGovern said that his interest in computers began in tenth grade after reading Edmund C. Berkeley's "Giant Brains" [June 30]. Inspired, he built a tic-tac-toe computer that won him a scholarship to MIT in the 1950s.

His first job, while still a student, was writing for *Computers & Automation*, the first computer magazine, founded by Berkeley.

In 1967, he launched *ComputerWorld*, which was originally going to be called "Computer World News" but at the specified font size the typesetter could only fit "Computer" and "World" into the space. In 1991 his company published "DOS For Dummies" by Dan Gookin, the first book of the very successful series.

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## Hollywood

### Hopping

**Aug. 11, 1942**

Hollywood actress Hedy Lamarr (born Hedwig Eva Maria Kiesler, with married name Markey) and composer George Antheil were awarded US Patent 2292387 on this day for a frequency-hopping spread spectrum communication system. The principles of their work are now an essential part of modern WiFi, CDMA, and Bluetooth [May 20] technologies.

During WWII, Lamarr learned that communications with radio-controlled torpedoes could easily be jammed. Her answer was a frequency-hopping signal that couldn't be easily tracked or jammed. She and Antheil developed the device by synchronizing a miniaturized player-piano mechanism with the radio signals. Unfortunately, their invention was difficult to build, and the Navy was unreceptive to inventions from outside the military. Only in 1962 (at the time of the Cuban missile crisis) did an updated version of their design first appear on Navy vessels.

Lamarr is perhaps best known today for her parts in Cecil B. DeMille's "Samson and Delilah" (1949) and "White Cargo" (1942). She deserves to be better known as an actress, but unfortunately turned down strong female roles in both *Gaslight* (1940) and *Casablanca* (1942).

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## Stephen (Stephan)

### Gary Wozniak

aka "The Woz"

**Born: Aug. 11, 1950;**  
Sunnyvale, California

Wozniak and Steve Jobs [Feb 24] were pioneers of the microcomputer era, co-founding Apple Computer on [April 1] 1976, with Wozniak designing both the Apple I [June 29] and Apple II [April 15].

In the early 1970s, Wozniak was known as "Berkeley Blue" in the phone phreaker community [May 17] after he made a tone generator (in a blue box) for making free phone calls [Oct 00].

Wozniak designed and built his first computer with Bill Fernandez in [June 00] 1971, calling it the "Cream Soda". Fernandez was also friends with Jobs and introduced them at around this time. The meeting occurred outside Wozniak's home while he was washing his car.



Steve Wozniak (1983). Photo by Alan Light. CC BY 2.0.

After his groundbreaking work at Apple, he took a leave of absence following a plane crash on [Feb 7] 1981, and organized the *US Festival* concerts [Sept 3].

He formally left Apple on [Feb 6] 1985, to complete his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering and computer science at UC Berkeley. To avoid the unwanted adoration of acolytes, he enrolled as Rocky Raccoon Clark, which is now engraved on his diploma. Rocky Raccoon was the name of his dog, and Clark his wife's surname.

In 1990, Wozniak helped found the Electronic Frontier Foundation [July 10], and other achievements include being a member of a Segway Polo team, the "Silicon Valley Aftershocks", and competing on Season 8 of "Dancing with the Stars" where he danced with Karina Smirnoff.

A famous quote: "Never trust a computer you can't throw out a window."

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## Avram Joel Spolsky

**Born: Aug. 11, 1965;**  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

In 2008 Spolsky and Jeff Atwood founded "Stack Overflow", a question-and-answer website for software developers.

Spolsky started working at Microsoft in 1991, where he helped design Excel Basic [May 2] and was implicated in Microsoft's "Visual Basic for Applications" strategy. In 2000, he formed Fog Creek Software and began his "Joel on Software" blog.

Spolsky coined the phrase "Schlemiel the Painter's algorithm" to refer to code that is inefficient because the programmer has overlooked some fundamental issue in software design. The name refers to a Yiddish joke about a painter of lines down the middle of a road. Each day, Schlemiel paints less than he painted the day before. When asked why, Schlemiel complains that it's because each day he gets farther away from the paint can.

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## HyperCard Released

**Aug. 11, 1987**

At the Macworld Expo, Apple introduced HyperCard, which arguably became the first successful hypermedia system. It was based on the concept of a "stack" of virtual "cards" of text and GUI elements, tied together with an object-oriented scripting language called HyperTalk.

HyperCard became a popular tool for presentations, simple databases, and "choose your own adventure" games. Notably, it was used to write the first version of the game, *Myst* [Sept 24], and implement the multimedia CD-ROMs of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night" [April 20]. It was even used to control a robot arm at

the National Film Board in Quebec.

The idea for HyperCard supposedly came to Bill Atkinson [April 27] during an LSD trip. He began working on the application in March 1985 under the name WildCard, and his team grew to around twenty people, including Dan Winkler (responsible for HyperTalk) and Marge Boots (illustrator and designer).

Atkinson gave HyperCard to Apple for free, on the understanding that it would be included for free with all Macs.

Atkinson later lamented that if he had only realized the power of network-oriented stacks, instead of focusing on stacks on a single machine, HyperCard could have become the first Web browser.

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## The Abyss

**Aug. 11, 1989**

20th Century Fox released the sci-fi horror film, "The Abyss", directed by James Cameron and starring Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) [Sept 12] created the first ever computer-generated 3D liquid effects for the movie, which would be put to good use again in Cameron's next film, "Terminator 2" [July 3].

The Abyss' "water tentacle" scene was one of the first to be filmed, to give the effects team the maximum amount of time to develop the CGI. The actors interacted with a length of hose held up by the set crew.

The film suffered from a problematic shoot, and the cast and crew began calling it by various derogatory names such as "The Abuse" and "Son Of Abyss".

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## The Geek Code

Aug. 11, 1993

The first version of "The Geek Code" by Robert A. Hayden was submitted to the USENET [\[Jan 29\]](#) newsgroups alt.geek and rec.humor.

By answering a series of questions about your interests across 17 categories, including dress style, skills with Linux [\[March 14\]](#) and UNIX, physical fitness, eating habits, love of Star Trek [\[Sept 8\]](#), and experience with role-playing games [\[July 27\]](#), a cryptic code is constructed. At one time, Hayden's geek code was:

```
GED/J d- s:++>: a- C++(++++)  
ULU++ P+ L++ E--- W+(-) N+++ O+  
K+++ w- O- M+ V- PS++>$ PE++>$  
Y++ PGP++ t- 5+++ X++ R+++>$ TV+  
b+ DI+++ D+++ G+++++ e++ h r-  
y++**
```

Over the years, the number of categories has grown, and now exceeds 30.

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## First Item Securely Sold on the Internet

Aug. 11, 1994

Although some might argue that a 72-year-old British grandmother named Jane Snowball was the first e-commerce user back in [\[May 12\]](#) 1984, she actually employed Videotex to order items from her local grocery, they were delivered by hand, and she paid in cash.

The first true e-commerce transaction probably occurred today. Dan Kohn, a 21-year-old who ran a website based in Nashua, New Hampshire called NetMarket, sold a CD of Sting's "Ten Summoner's Tales" album to a friend at Swarthmore College in Philadelphia. The friend paid \$12.48 with his credit card, plus shipping costs, in a transaction that was encrypted. This was made possible by NetMarket requiring that customers download a

browser that that incorporated Pretty Good Privacy (PGP [\[June 5\]](#)) and ran only on UNIX.

Other challengers to this record include The Internet Shopping Network, which began selling computer equipment online in July via a browser called "Secure Mosaic", and CDconnection.com which claims to have been selling CDs online since 1990.

The requirement for ordinary mortals to grapple with the intricacies of public key encryption meant that sites continued to gather customers' credit card numbers by phone and fax for most orders. Web retailing only began to flourish the following year, when Netscape [\[March 25\]](#) incorporated the Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) security protocol.

If you don't mind including non-secure online shopping, then France's Minitel [\[May 10\]](#) and Germany's Bildschirmtext had been selling air and train tickets since the 1980's. In the US, early Internet users could use services like Prodigy [\[Feb 13\]](#), CompuServe [\[Sept 24\]](#), and AOL [\[Oct 2\]](#).

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## Red Hat

Aug. 11, 1999

Red Hat Software went public, causing the value of its stock to triple in the eighth largest first-day gain in Wall Street history.



A red Cornell lacrosse hat. (c) Cornell Athletics.

Marc Ewing first released a Red Hat Linux distribution in October 1994 (during

Halloween), naming it after a red Cornell lacrosse hat given to him by his grandfather.

Bob Young's ACC Corporation (sellers of Linux and UNIX software) merged with Ewing's business in 1995, to become Red Hat Software, with Young becoming CEO.

Young pinpoints the company's breakthrough to Feb. 1998, when *InfoWorld* magazine awarded its Operating System of the Year honor to Red Hat's Linux 5.2. At the time, Microsoft controlled more than 85% of the market for OSes.

The company's business model relies on the selling of support, training, and services for open source products. It works since Red Hat became the first \$1 billion open source company in 2012, and in 2019, IBM acquired the business for \$34 billion.

For more Linux distributions, see [\[Aug 15\]](#), [\[July 17\]](#), [\[Sept 15\]](#), [\[Dec 22\]](#), [\[Oct 20\]](#), [\[April 15\]](#), and [\[Feb 19\]](#).

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## Blaster Worm

Aug. 11, 2003

The Blaster worm (aka MSBlast and Lovesan) was identified on this day. It took advantage of a known vulnerability in MS Windows' [\[Oct 25\]](#) Distributed Component Object Model (DCOM), which handled messages sent using the remote procedure call (RPC [\[Feb 1\]](#)) protocol. By crashing the system's RPC service, the worm could force the computer to shut down and reboot.

The worm contained two messages. The first read:

```
I just want to say LOVE YOU  
SAN!!
```

The second was:

```
billy gates why do you make  
this possible ? Stop making  
money and fix your software!
```

The worm also tried to start a denial-of-service attack against Microsoft's Windows update site, which was temporarily shut down.

Microsoft estimated that between 8 and 16 million machines were affected.

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## Yahoo! Buys into Alibaba.com

### Aug. 11, 2005

Prev: [\[Jan 30\]](#) Next: [\[Sept 7\]](#)

Yahoo! [\[April 12\]](#) acquired 40% of Alibaba.com [\[April 4\]](#) for \$1 billion, and Alibaba took over the running of Yahoo! China [\[Sept 7\]](#).

The first steps in the deal started in May when Jerry Yang [\[Nov 6\]](#) (still Yahoo!'s CEO at the time) chatted with Jack Ma (Alibaba's CEO) at a summit for Chinese and Silicon Valley executives in Pebble Beach, California. In the following weeks, Yahoo! launched Project Pebble to explore how to build a relationship with Alibaba.

The acquisition turned out to be a very good deal. In September 2012, Yahoo's new CEO, Scott Thompson, agreed to sell 523 million Alibaba shares, half of its stake, back to Alibaba at \$13 apiece. On Sept. 19, 2014, Alibaba's shares began trading on the NYSE and rocketed past \$90 apiece.

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