Victor Mikhailovich Glushkov

Born: Aug. 24, 1923;

Rostov-on-Don, USSR
Died: Jan. 30, 1982

Glushkov was one of the founding father of information technology in the Soviet Union. In the late 1950's he played a key role in setting up the computing center at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, where he was appointed director, and thereafter transformed it into the Institute of Cybernetics, one of the leading computing centers in the USSR.

Viktor Mikhailovich Glushkov. Drawing from an official Soviet envelope, issued on February 1983.

He also found time to write several textbooks on automata theory, and design several languages, such as ANALYTIC, for the analytical transformation of algebraic expressions.

Glushkov's is also remembered for his ambitious 1962 plan to build a real-time, remote-access national computer network, the All-State Automated System, or OGAS. It would utilize a hierarchy, not unlike that of the Soviet economy – a central computer in Moscow would be linked to 200 mid-level computer centers in the main cities, which would in turn be connected to as many as 20,000 computer terminals at industrial and economic centers surrounding those cities. Unfortunately, he never managed to convince the Government to support his ideas.

First Gen Con
Aug. 24, 1968

The first official Gen Con was held at the Horticultural Hall in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, with about 100 people attending. An unofficial gathering of about 10 people (later called "Gen Con 0") had been held the previous year at the home of the event's founder, Gary Gygax [July 27].

Over the coming years, Gen Con evolved into one of the most prominent tabletop-gaming conventions in North America. It favored traditional pen-and-paper board games, card games, and role-playing games, although a few computer games were occasionally allowed to intrude.

Gen Con's name is a derivation of "Geneva Convention", due to its origins in Lake Geneva. Of course, the Geneva Conventions are also international treaties regarding war, the subject of many board games.

Welcome, IBM. Seriously.
Aug. 24, 1981

Apple ran a full-page ad in *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 days after the IBM PC was released [Aug 12], which began with the words: "Welcome, IBM. Seriously."

Many found the advert puzzling, though some commentators called it a canny move by Steve Jobs [Feb 24] to position Apple as the obvious alternative to IBM (even though other PC companies, such as Commodore [Oct 10], Tandy [Feb 2], and Osborne [April 3], were just as successful at the time).

Ultima II Released
Aug. 24, 1982

Sierra On-Line [Oct 30] released Ultima II for the Atari and PCs, the second RPG in the series (as the name might suggest) [Sept 2]. It was coded in assembly instead of BASIC, making it significantly faster.

Game play centered around travelling to different periods of history through 'time doors': the Time of Legends, Pangea, B.C., A.D. (1990), and the Aftermath (after 2112). The player could also visit other planets in the solar system.

Ultima II was the first game in the series to include a cloth map in the box, which would later become a staple of the franchise. This map, which illustrated how the time doors were linked, was inspired by the one in the film "Time Bandits" (1981), as were the time doors themselves.

The inclusion of physical items with computer games gave them a unique selling point and, perhaps most importantly, made the games harder to copy since they were no longer purely digital.

Apple Loses to Microsoft
Aug. 24, 1993

Prev: [March 17] Next: [Dec 6]

After five long, argumentative years [March 17], a decision was reached in the Apple v. Microsoft lawsuit, over the GUI elements in Apple's Lisa [Jan 19] and the Mac [Jan 24].

The court ruled that, "Apple cannot get patent-like protection for the idea of a graphical user interface, or the idea of a desktop metaphor [under copyright law]…".

The court also pointed out that many of Apple's claims also

failed on an originality basis. Apple had licensed several of its GUI representations from Xerox (see [Dec 00]), and copyright protection only extends to original expression.

Apple had also licensed parts of its GUI to Microsoft for use in Windows 1.0 [Nov 22], and the majority of these licenses still applied to Windows 2.0 [Dec 9].

This decision paved the way for Microsoft to develop Windows 95, which imitated the Macintosh even more strongly. Strangely, Windows 95 was released on this very day in 1995 [two entries on].

Apple and Microsoft were to come blows again in the so-called "QuickTime Piracy" lawsuit [Dec 6] in 1994.

Dylan Infringement
Aug. 24, 1994

Singer Bob Dylan filed a trademark infringement suit against Apple over the company's use of the name Dylan for a new programming language it had released at the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in May.

Bob Dylan (1984). Photo by BStoned59. CC BY 2.0.

According to the lawsuit, "Apple is intentionally using, and intentionally has used, the names of famous individuals, including (Isaac) Newton [May 29], Carl Sagan [Jan 10] and now Dylan, in conjunction with

Apple's products in a deliberate attempt to capitalize on the goodwill associated with these famous individuals."

Dylan had been created in the early 1990s, for the Newton. Unfortunately it wasn't finished in time, and most Newton coding was instead done in a combination of C and NewtonScript. At that time Dylan was code-named Ralph.

The two parties reached a confidential out-of-court settlement, and the language was briefly released for 68000 based Macs in the fall of 1995.

Rumor has it that Dylan was encouraged to sue Apple by the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, who was earning generous royalties from "Cherry Garcia", a flavor of Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

Bob Dylan was born Robert Zimmerman, and legally adopted the first name of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas in Aug. 1962. Dylan Thomas had died in Nov. 1953.

Windows 95 Released
Aug. 24, 1995

Prev: [July 27]; Next: [June 25]

Windows 95 (code-named Chicago) was possibly the largest product launch ever. The main event was held in a circus tent put up on Microsoft's campus in Redmond, with Bill Gates [Oct 28] and *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno as hosts. Leno was heard to say about computers at the rehearsal: "I came illiterate, now I'm leaving virtually retarded."

Over 10,000 people were invited to attend various events, including having The Empire State Building lit to match the colors of the Windows logo, and a 328-foot banner hung from the top of the CN Tower in Toronto.

TV commercials featured The Rolling Stones' 1981 single "Start Me Up" (a reference to the Start button) [April 6].

Aside from all the hullabaloo, Windows 95 did feature some significant improvements, most notably in its GUI and its "plug-and-play" features. New bits-and-pieces included dial-up networking, an integrated TCP/IP [Sept 9] stack, and support for long filenames. Internet Explorer [Aug 16] made its debut, but as part of the add-on Windows 95 Plus! pack. This version of Windows was also the first not to require MS-DOS [Aug 12] to be pre-installed.

The OS consisted of more than 11 million lines of code, written by 300 programmers, and tested by over 50,000 individuals and companies before its release. The youngest tester was Adam Baratz, then 9 years old. Nevertheless, in preparation for the anticipated deluge of calls for help, 1,600 technical staff were assigned to the support lines.

Perhaps its most famous bug (which it also shared with Windows 98 [June 25]) was a tendency to hang after 49.7 days of uptime. This was caused by the GetTickTime() function in the Windows API which returned a DWORD value representing the number of milliseconds since the system booted.

A DWORD occupied 32 bit, allowing it to express a value up to 2^{32} = 4,294,967,296 ms. There are 86,400,000 milliseconds in one day, and so the total number of days a DWORD could store was 4,294,967,296 / 86,400,000 = 49.7102696.

Voila! After 49.71 days, the number of milliseconds would exceed the maximum DWORD value, and roll around to 0. Clearly some code in Windows didn't handle this too well, and the OS hung.

More than 1 million copies of Windows 95 were sold in the first four days of the release.

MSN Launched

Aug. 24, 1995

On the same day that Microsoft launched Windows 95 [previous entry], it also launched MSN (Microsoft Network) as a competitor to AOL [Oct 2]. There was also a new web portal, named Microsoft Internet Start, that was set as the default home page of Internet Explorer [Aug 16].

Rather confusingly, the MSN name was used for a variety of products and services over the coming years, notably connected to Hotmail [July 4] (later called Outlook.com), Messenger (which was later replaced by Skype [Aug 29]), and its web search engine [Nov 10] (now pushed aside by Bing [June 3]).

Another major renaming occurred in 2005, when many of MSN's beloved services were reorganized under the brand name, Windows Live. This name fell from favor in 2012.

The MSN website was revamped in 2014, under Microsoft's "cloud first, mobile first" strategy promoted by CEO Satya Nadella [Jan 6].

IBM Left Waiting

Aug. 24, 1995

IBM was only granted Windows 95 OEM rights fifteen minutes before its release [two entries ago], which meant that IBM machines had to be sold without Windows 95 for quite some time, while Compaq, HP, and other major PC manufacturers had it installed from the get-go. Not only was there a delay, but IBM's license fee for using the OS was the highest of any company.

On [Nov 5] 1999, Judge Jackson, in his finding for United States v. Microsoft, determined that Microsoft's behavior was punishment for IBM marketing Lotus SmartSuite [July 6] and other alternatives to Microsoft products.