

July 6th

## Morgan Sparks

**Born: July 6, 1916;**

Pagosa Springs, Colorado USA  
Died: May 3, 2008

In 1951 Sparks helped develop the first practical transistor, the Microwatt bipolar junction transistor, with William Shockley [Feb 13] and Gordon Teal [May 10]. It was a critical step in making transistors usable for everyday electronics.

He joined the Semiconductor Research Group at Bell Labs in 1948 just after John Bardeen [May 23], Walter Brattain [Feb 10], and Shockley announced the point-contact transistor on [Dec 23] 1947.

Shockley had invented the bipolar junction transistor on June 23, 1948, and a patent was filed shortly afterwards, on June 26. Thereafter, Gordon Teal and Sparks built most of the first prototypes, concentrating on figuring out how to grow the necessary semiconductor crystals.

Sparks worked closely with Shockley, and with Shockley's secretary – Bette MacEvoy – who he married in 1949.

## Adi Shamir

**Born: July 6, 1952;**

Tel Aviv, Israel

In 1977, Shamir co-invented the RSA encryption algorithm [Sept 6] (RSA is short for Ron Rivest [May 6], Shamir, and Leonard Adleman [Dec 31]).

He was also the co-inventor of the Feige-Fiat-Shamir identification scheme which allows a person to prove to someone else that he has secret information without revealing the contents of that information.

Together with Eli Biham, he discovered differential cryptanalysis, a general method for attacking ciphers by

searching for non-random elements. It later emerged that differential cryptanalysis was already known to IBM and the NSA [Oct 24], but they'd kept it to themselves.

Shamir's "Secret Sharing" algorithm divides a secret into parts, giving each participant a piece. Some (or all) of those parts must be brought back together to reconstruct the secret.

## EFF

**July 6, 1990**

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF; <https://www.eff.org/>) was founded by John Perry Barlow [Oct 3] and Mitch Kapor [Nov 1] to campaign for civil liberties in the digital world.

In April 1990, Barlow had been visited by an FBI agent about the theft and distribution of the source code for some Macintosh ROMs. Barlow later described the visit as "complicated by [the agent's] fairly complete unfamiliarity with computer technology. I realized right away that before I could demonstrate my innocence, I would first have to explain to him what guilt might be."

Barlow posted messages about his experience on the WELL [April 1] and was contacted by Kapor who had had a similar encounter. Around the same time, the WELL also hosted a discussion of how the FBI had violated the civil liberties of suspected hackers during its Operation Sundevil [May 7].

The first major case supported by the EFF was Steve Jackson Games v. the US Secret Service [March 1]. The next involved Daniel J. Bernstein suing the US government for permission to publish his encryption software, Snuffle, and a paper describing it. In May 1999, the court ruled that computer code was speech and so protected by the Constitution.

In June 2014 the EFF flew a Greenpeace blimp over the

NSA's Utah Data Center [Oct 24] to protest against its purported illegal spying.



Blimp over the NSA Utah Data Center. Photo by Greenpeace. CC BY 3.0.

## IBM Buys Lotus

**July 6, 1995**

IBM completed a \$3.5 billion buyout of Lotus, the developer of the once-dominant Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet application [Jan 26] and the then-popular Lotus Notes groupware [Dec 7].

IBM hoped to use 1-2-3 to challenge the young but increasingly sprightly Microsoft Excel [May 2], but that wasn't to be. 1-2-3 steadily lost ground, and IBM announced the end of support for the software in 2014. Lotus Notes fared little better, eventually out-gunned by Microsoft Exchange [June 11].

Another battle front was IBM's development of Lotus SmartSuite to face off against Microsoft Office [Aug 1]. They lost that conflict as well.

All this 'fighting' led to a certain level of bad feeling between the companies, perhaps typified by the famous late license for MS Windows 95 [Aug 24], granted to IBM just 15 minutes before the OS's release. This meant that IBM machines had to be sold without Windows 95 for some several weeks afterwards.

## Palm Pre June 6, 2009

Palm [March 10] released the Palm Pre smartphone through Sprint, in an attempt to regain marketshare after their Treo line had been decimated by the release of Apple's iPhone [June 29].



The Palm Pre. Photo by Ярослав2017. CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Pre ran the Linux-based Palm webOS, which was praised by some technical reviewers, but it had arrived too late, or as one commentator later said: "When you play the game of phones, you win or you die." Palm was purchased by HP for \$1.2 billion just over a year later, on July 1, 2010.

A year later, after only seven weeks of poor sales of their TouchPad tablets, HP halted production of all webOS-based devices. Eventually, the company sold off its supply of TouchPads for \$99 each, which briefly made them very popular.

## Pokémon Go Released July 6, 2016

Pokémon Go is an augmented reality game for iOS and Android devices where the player locates, captures, battles, and trains virtual creatures, called Pokémon, who roam about in real-life locations.

The hugely popular game was developed by Niantic and Nintendo, based on the

Pokémon video games by Satoshi Tajiri. The series began in 1996 with the release of "Pokémon Red and Blue" for the Game Boy [April 21].

The addition of the real world to Pokémon Go caused a few problems, including a certain amount of outrage when Pokémon popped up in cemeteries, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, and the US Holocaust Memorial. Also, Bosnian players were advised not to follow their Pokémon out into minefields left over from the 1990s Bosnian War.

## Feed Your Webmaster July 6

The "Take Your Webmaster to Lunch" Day was conceived by Thomas Roy and his wife Ruth, and is actually just one of approximately 80 copyrighted "special days", that they have invented. Such days appear in Chase's "Calendar of Events", an annual US publication.

Roy's interest in "day creation" began when he was flipping through the book and came across the form at the back which allowed for the submission of new "holidays."

Roy's full-time occupation is being the Associate Producer of the annual Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire, where he also acts, directs, and teaches the art of improvisation.