Carl Adam Petri

Born: July 12, 1926;

Leipzig, Germany
Died: July 2, 2010

Petri is best known for inventing the Petri Net, a graph-based modeling tool for parallel and distributed systems, when he was just 13 years old. He used them initially to describe chemical processes.

In the late 1970s, Konrad Zuse [June 22] worked with Petri on using Petri Nets as a model for the laws of physics. Zuse later wrote two books about the subject: "Petri Nets from the Viewpoint of an Engineer" (1980) and "Applications of Petri Nets" (1982).

Vojislav (Voja) Antonić

Born: July 12, 1952;

Šabac, Serbia, then Yugoslavia

Antonić created a build-it-yourself home computer called the Galaksija (the Galaxy) which he described in an article in the special January 1984 edition of the Yugoslavian magazine *Galaksija* called "Računari u vašoj kući" (Computers in your Home), edited by Dejan Ristanović.

By utilizing a cheap Zilog Z80 [March 9] to manage and control video generation, Antonić designed a machine that was within the price range of ordinary people to construct themselves. He also essentially released the Galaksija schematic to the public domain.

The initial circulation of 30,000 copies of the magazine was sold out in a matter of weeks, so another one of the same size was printed, followed by a third edition of 40,000 copies at the end of the year. By some estimates, some 80,000 Galaksija were built.

Hand-held Gaming

July 12, 1960

The *Etch A Sketch* was one of the earliest hand-held gaming devices, and the result of five years of work by its inventor André Cassagnes. *L'Ecran Magique* (the "magic screen", as it was first called) was operated by twisting two knobs to move a stylus that displaced aluminum powder on the back of the screen, leaving a solid line.

It debuted at the 1959 International Toy Fair in Nuremberg, but 'drew' little attention until the Ohio Art Company paid $25,000 for the license. The company renamed it the Etch A Sketch and began production in 1960 making it the must-have Christmas toy for that year.

The *Etch A Sketch Animator* (1987) was an early electronic version, featuring a low-resolution dot matrix display but with the same knobs-based interface (KBI) for drawing, and several new buttons to manipulate the drawings. It could store up to 12 pictures which could be strung together to create an animation.

The Etch A Sketch Animator. Photo by Tim Morgan.

AI Beats Man

July 12, 1962

Arthur Samuel [Dec 5] decided to have his Checkers program [Feb 24] challenge a strong player in a series of games. He chose Robert W. Nealey, a blind checkers player from Stamford, Connecticut, who would later become state champion.

Nealey lost one game against the program after making a fairly elementary mistake, leaving his back rank unguarded. In a rematch the following year, consisting of six game, Nealey scored one win and five draws.

In 1966, Samuel's program played four games each against Walter Hellman (the longest reigning world US champion) and Derek Oldbury (a UK champion), and lost all eight.

Sysops Do Strange Things

July 12, 1985

The "Private Sector BBS", the bulletin board for 2600 magazine [Jan 12], was seized in a raid after Middlesex County police uncovered credit card fraud on another, unrelated BBS.

At a press conference on July 16, prosecutors alleged that the board's sysops had repositioned space satellites and done "strange things" to computers in the defense department.

Ultimately, all the equipment was returned and all charges dropped, except for a single fourth-degree misdemeanor.

Over the years, 2600 magazine has supported numerous cases related to technology and freedom of speech, perhaps the most significant being the one involving the DeCSS copy protection tool [March 00]

SSH

July 12, 1995

Tatu Ylönen of Helsinki University of Technology released the first version of the Secure Shell (SSH), a protocol for securely running services over an unsecured network. His aim was to offer a replacement for the old rlogin [Nov 8], telnet [April 3], FTP [Nov 23], and rsh protocols, which didn't provide

strong authentication, or guarantee confidentiality.

Ylönen was inspired to start the work after his university's network fell victim to a password-sniffing attack.

By the end of 1995, there were already 20,000 users in fifty countries, but OpenSSH eventually became the most popular SSH implementation. It was forked from SSH after it became proprietary, sold by SSH Communications Security, founded by Ylönen.

BlackBerry 850
July 12, 1999

RIM [March 7] began selling its first BlackBerry device: the 850 which was one of the first wireless devices capable of connecting users to their corporate email services. For instance, it could receive email from a Microsoft Exchange Server via the BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES).

In a canny move, RIM also began offering email services on non-BlackBerry devices, such as the Palm [June 1] Treo, via its BlackBerry Connect software.

The Blackberry series was named due to the resemblance of its keyboard's keys to the bumps on the same-named fruit.

One Red Paperclip
July 12, 2005

The "One Red Paperclip" website was created by Canadian blogger Kyle MacDonald on this day. Over the course of a year, he managed to barter the paperclip into a house using just fourteen online trades. He had been inspired by the childhood game "Bigger and Better".

MacDonald traded the paperclip for a fish-shaped pen, on July 14, and reached his "house" goal on July 5, 2006 when he traded a movie role in "Donna on Demand" (2009) for a two-story

farmhouse located in Kipling, Saskatchewan (pop 1,100).

The paperclip. Photo by Kyle MacDonald. CC BY 2.0.

MacDonald later donated the house to the town, who turned it into a café and tourist attraction, called "The Red Paperclip House". The café features the world's largest red paperclip on display outside.

OK Computer
July 12, 1997 / 2017

"OK Computer" was the third studio album by English alternative rock band Radiohead. It was also reissued 20 years later, also on this day.

One of the album's themes was the effects of rampant consumerism, and the record garnered widespread critical acclaim.

The reissued, very reasonably priced, £100 commemorative box-set was entitled OKNOTOK, and included an audio cassette, ending with two minutes of high-pitched noise. Playing this audio on a ZX Spectrum [April 23] emulator (after processing it with a 3.5kHz low-pass filter) produced a 30-line program which prints a list of the band members. This is followed by a minute-long series of randomly generated colors and beeps.

The code's first ten or so lines also contain a message as a series of comments, which reads "congratulations….you've found the secret message syd lives hmmmm. We should get out more."

The ZX Spectrum connection is due to the fifth track, "Let Down", which features sounds produced using a Spectrum by guitarist/keyboardist Jonny

Greenwood. In addition, track seven, "Fitter Happier", includes spoken-word lyrics recited by the "Fred" voice from the Macintosh MacinTalk application [Jan 24].

Radiohead aren't the first band to add code to their music, that was Chris Sievey (aka Frank Sidebottom) on his [April 1] 1983 single "Camoflage".