

July 27th

## Ernest Gary Gygax

**Born: July 27, 1938;**

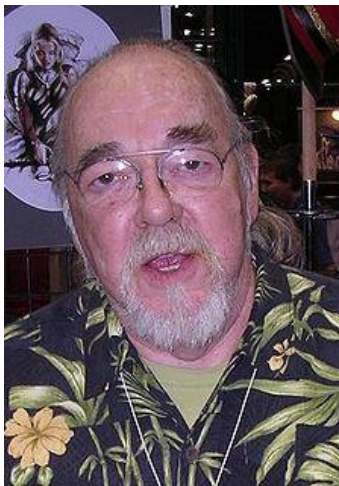
Chicago, Illinois

Died: March 4, 2008

Gygax is known as the father of the fantasy role-playing game "Dungeons & Dragons" (D&D), which he co-created with Dave Arneson.

The first version was released in January 1974 as a 150-page booklet entitled, "Dungeons & Dragons: Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargame Campaigns Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures". The first 1,000 copies were printed and assembled in the basement of Gygax's home, at 330 Center Street, in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The booklet cost \$10, but the entire run was sold out in less than a year.

The first computer game based on D&D was probably "The Dungeon" [Dec 22], released at the end of 1975.



Gary Gygax (2007). Photo by Alan De Smet. CC BY 3.0.

Gygax wasn't directly involved with D&D's development after 1985, and his relationship with his former company, TSR (Tactical Studies Rules) Inc., became somewhat strained at times. Instead, he created "Dangerous Journeys" (1992) and "Lejendary Adventure"

(1999) two role-playing games, a number of board games, and also wrote several fantasy novels.

Gygax held the first unofficial Geneva Convention (GenCon) at his house in 1967, which has since become one of the largest hobby gaming conventions in the world (and has also moved venue).

Gygax's interest in dungeons may have something to do with one of his childhood hobbies. Gygax and his best friend Don Kaye used to sneak into the abandoned Oak Hill psychiatric hospital to explore the tunnels under the building.

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## Edmund Melson Clarke, Jr.

**Born: July 27, 1945;**

Newport News. Virginia

Clarke is noted for developing model checking, a method for formally verifying hardware and software designs. In particular, in 1981 he and E. Allen Emerson suggested using model checking to verify concurrent finite state systems.

Later, his research group pioneered the use of symbolic model checking using Binary decision diagrams (BDDs). BDDs drastically reduce the storage required to represent state spaces, which in turn reduces the time required to run the model checker on real-size systems.

His group also developed the first parallel resolution theorem prover, and the first theorem prover based on a symbolic computation system.

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## 86-DOS

**July 27, 1981**

Prev: [Nov 6]; Next: [Aug 12]

Microsoft bought the rights to 86-DOS (a renamed QDOS) from Seattle Computer Products (SCP) for \$50,000. This was about two weeks before IBM

began shipping the first IBM PC [Aug 12] with Microsoft's MS-DOS (renamed as PC-DOS by IBM).

Microsoft had obtained a non-exclusive license for 86-DOS back on [Sept 22] 1980, and then began porting it to the IBM PC. Also, on May 1 1981, Tim Paterson [June 1], the 22-year old developer of 86-DOS, had been persuaded to leave SCP to join Microsoft.

After the remarkable success of the IBM venture, SCP sued Microsoft for \$60 million in damages, claiming fraud because Microsoft hadn't revealed that IBM was a licensee.

On Dec. 16, 1986, Microsoft agreed to buy back seven licensing agreements from SCP for \$925,000 in an out-of-court settlement. This was a fraction of the annual revenue Microsoft was receiving by then for MS-DOS and PC-DOS.

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## Rickrolling July 27, 1987

The single, "Never Gonna Give You Up", was released by British singer/songwriter Rick Astley. It quickly became a worldwide number-one hit, and stayed at the top of the charts in the UK for five weeks, making it the best-selling single of that year.

Some time during 2007, the song (and video) gained a new lease of life when they became the subject of a popular Internet prank known as "rickrolling". This involves persuading the gullible to follow Web links which unexpectedly lead to the song's video.

The first known rickroll occurred in May 2007 on /v/, 4chan's [Oct 1] video game board, where a link to the video was claimed to be a mirror of the first trailer for "Grand Theft Auto IV" [Oct 21].

Rickrolling became more widely recognized after its use as a 2008 April Fools' Day [April 1] joke by various media companies and websites,

including YouTube's rickrolling of all of its featured videos.

In the same year, Astley won the MTV Europe Music Award for "Best Act Ever", as a result of the votes of thousands of people on the Internet.

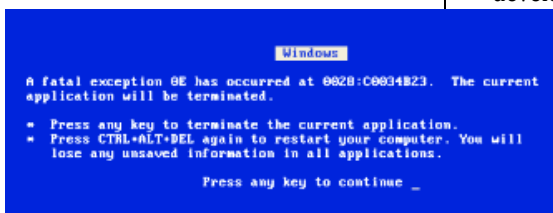
For more Internet memes [\[Nov 15\]](#), see [\[April 21\]](#), [\[Aug 00\]](#), [\[May 31\]](#), [\[Jan 5\]](#).

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## BSoD Arises July 27, 1993

The "Blue Screen of Death" (BSoD) is a blue-colored error screen displayed by Windows after a fatal system crash.

A popular story is that Steve Ballmer [\[March 24\]](#) wrote the BSoD code while he was in charge of the company's Systems Division. This is not true, although blue screen error messages had been around since Windows 3.0 [\[May 22\]](#) when he led that division, although they weren't necessarily fatal back then. There was a special fatal error message in Windows 3.1 [\[April 6\]](#), but it was black.



A Windows 95 BSOD. Screenshot by DevEd.

The phrase "BSoD" was first coined for the fatal error messages of Windows NT [\[next entry\]](#). However, Windows 98 [\[June 25\]](#) displayed a red error screen when the computer's BIOS had a problem. Windows 10 [\[July 29\]](#) features a much less scary green error screen, but Windows 11 promises **black death**.

A famous BSoD occurred during a presentation of Windows 98 Beta by Bill Gates [\[Oct 28\]](#) at COMDEX [\[April 20\]](#).

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## Windows NT 3.1 July 27, 1993

Prev: [\[April 6\]](#) ; Next: [\[Aug 24\]](#)

Although Windows NT 3.1 was the first OS in the NT series, it used numbering that matched the current version of the 16-bit Windows. In fact, NT was the first purely 32-bit Windows, while its consumer-oriented counterparts, Windows 3.1x and Windows 9x, were 16-bit/32-bit hybrids.

NT contained a new kernel that wasn't based on MS-DOS [\[Aug 12\]](#). Other notable new features were the NTFS File System, HAL (the Hardware Abstraction Layer, not a deadly AI [\[April 2\]](#)), preemptive multitasking, threading, and plug-and-play device drivers.

The plan was to have the NT family gradually replace Windows 9x, and just to confuse (or perhaps disguise) matters "NT" was removed from the product name starting with Windows 2000 [\[Feb 17\]](#).

Dave Cutler [\[March 13\]](#) led NT's development after leaving

Digital [\[Aug 23\]](#), so some observers claim NT as a descendent of DEC's VMS [\[Oct 25\]](#). Indeed, it's been suggested that Cutler intended the initials "WNT" as a play on

VMS, by incrementing each letter by one. However, Bill Gates [\[Oct 28\]](#), has always said that the letters mean "Windows New Technology".

In 1988, when the project began, the team comprised just 20 engineers. By the time the first version of NT shipped five years later, the team had expanded to about 150.

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## Masters of the New Universe July 27, 1998

The cover story of *Forbes* magazine was entitled "Masters of the New Universe", and was

accompanied by a photo showing 13 assorted male Internet entrepreneurs, hanging out casually in a large warehouse.

The full list of attendees are: Jeff Bezos [\[Jan 12\]](#), Sky Dayton [\[Aug 8\]](#), Joe Firmage, Shikhar Ghosh, Rob Glaser [\[April 10\]](#), Jerry Kaplan [\[April 9\]](#), Mike Levy, Halsey Minor [\[March 5\]](#), Henry Nicolas [\[Sept 20\]](#), Kevin O'Connor, Larry Rosen, Gil Shwed, Jerry Yang [\[Nov 6\]](#). The youngest "Master" was Sky Dayton (26), the oldest Larry Rosen (58).

Many of these people are less prominent today, and there are several 'obvious' absentees, including Sergey Brin [\[Aug 21\]](#) and Larry Page [\[March 26\]](#). However, Google's official birthday is [\[Sept 27\]](#) 1998, a few months after this story appeared. However, at least Yang knew who they were since Yahoo! had just declined an opportunity to license their PageRank technology.

Ghosh later recalled how he forgot to tell his wife about the photo shoot, who then brought it up during dinner one night when he asked her to pass him a dish of food: "You're a 'Master of the Universe' now," she told him. "You should make it come to you."

A somewhat equivalent group photo from the 2000s, is *Fortune* magazine's "PayPal Mafia" [\[Nov 26\]](#). It also features 13 men.

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## HitchBOT July 27 - August 21, 2014

HitchBOT was a Canadian "hitchhiking robot" created by David Harris Smith and Frauke Zeller. It successfully hitchhiked across Canada from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Victoria, British Columbia during these dates, travelling over 10,000 kms in just 19 rides.

The robot's body was a plastic bucket, with two flexible non-functioning "arms" and "legs".

The top section was transparent, containing a screen which displayed cartoon-like eyes and a mouth.

It hitchhiked by asking to be carried by those who picked it up, and was able to carry on a basic conversation.

It included GPS and 3G links to track its location, and a camera to document its journey. It was powered by solar cells or from a vehicle's cigarette lighter socket.

HitchBOT's next adventure – an attempt to cross the US from Salem, Massachusetts to San Francisco – did not end so well. Just two weeks into the trip, the researchers announced that they needed to stop the experiment because hitchBOT had been decapitated in Philadelphia.

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