# March 9th

## Jef (Jeff) Raskin

### Born: March 9, 1943;

New York City
Died: Feb. 26, 2005

Raskin helped persuade the Apple team to transform the Lisa [Jan 19] from a text-based computer to one incorporating graphics features similar to those he'd seen at Xerox PARC [July 1].

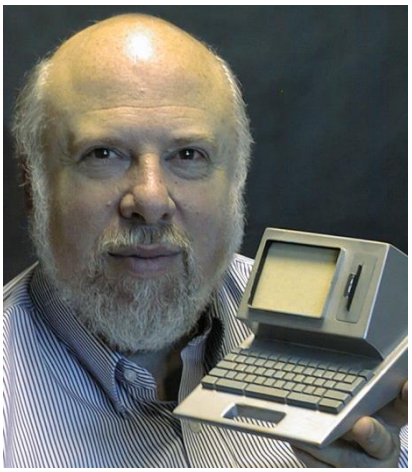
Raskin also founded the Macintosh project, although his vision for the Mac was very different from what Steve Jobs' team finally produced [Jan 24]. Raskin wanted a simple "information appliance," selling for about $1,000. The machine was to be similar in power to the Apple II [June 5] but include a 9-inch black-and-white character display built into the case along with a floppy disk drive. It would be command line driven, as Raskin disliked a mouse, or anything else, that might take his hands off the keyboard.

In Sept. 1979, he hired his former student Bill Atkinson [April 27] from UCSD, along with Andy Hertzfeld [April 6] and Burrell Smith [Dec 16] from the Apple Service Department

Jobs wasn't involved for the first year, but he took control of the project on Jan. 20, 1981 after he'd been removed from the Lisa project by Apple CEO Michael Scott.

Raskin disliked Job's managerial style, and complained in writing on Feb. 19, 1981. The result was Raskin departure on an extended leave of absence (just before Apple's Black Wednesday [Feb 25]), and he quit the Mac team permanently in the summer. Raskin's opinion of Steve Jobs: "He would have made an excellent King of France."

Raskin left Apple in Feb. 1982, two years before the Macintosh went on sale. However, his Mac concepts didn't disappear. Something close to them launched as the "Canon Cat" in 1987. Its innovative interface attracted some interest, but the machine wasn't a commercial success.



Jef Raskin holding a model of the Canon Cat. Photo by Aza Raskin. CC BY 2.5.

Raskin was a former conductor of the San Francisco Chamber Opera Society, and could play several instruments. He also curated several art shows including one featuring his collection of unusual toys. He changed his name from "Jeff" to "Jef" after meeting Jon Collins.

A quote: "Imagine if every Thursday your shoes exploded if you tied them the usual way. This happens to us all the time with computers, and nobody thinks of complaining."

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## NYSE Gets a Voice

### March 9, 1965

The New York Stock Exchange's (NYSE) first large real-time system was the IBM-based Market Data System (MDS), which integrated its stock indexing and clearing operations. Development had begun in 1962, and the system became fully operational on Dec. 20 1966, although parts of it, such as the Quotation Service, went live on this day, the previous year.

Subscribing organizations could dial a four-digit number to get information on any of the more than 1,600 listed stocks. After less than a second 's delay, a recorded voice would speak the latest bid-ask and last sale data.

The service could handle as many as 400,000 telephone inquiries per day – an increase of 60% over the old service.

Each spoken message was automatically composed from pre-recorded words. The voice belonged to Robert Rew, a 31-year-old senior associate engineer at IBM.

Rew and his wife, Lois, a phoneticist, had worked on the system together. The Rews had tried assigning the speaking role to IBM secretaries but the results had been disappointing. Finally, Mrs. Rew convinced her husband to audition, and later remarked: "Phonetically speaking, his easy-to-understand Midwest accent got him the job."

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## Zilog Z80

### March 9, 1976

The 8-bit Zilog Z80 chip was designed by Federico Faggin [Dec 1] and Masatoshi Shima [Aug 22] after they left Intel to form Zilog with Ralph Ungermann at the end of 1974. The first version became operational on this day, and the product was officially announced in July.

Faggin and Shima deliberately designed the instruction set to be binary compatible with the Intel 8080 [April 18] so that most code, notably the CP/M [June 22] OS, would run unmodified. The Z80 also improved on the 8080 in many ways: there were 80 additional instructions, more registers, more interrupts, and the chip only needed a single 5V source.

The Z80 became the most commonly used CPU of the early 1980's, and, along with the MOS 6502 [Sept 16], dominated the home computer market. It helped that both were very cheap – around $25 each.

Zilog still makes the Z80, which remains popular for embedded systems. Nowadays they cost around $2 each (and even less when purchased in bulk).

## BSD Begins

### March 9, 1978

The first Berkeley Software Distribution (BSD) was a version of UNIX [Oct 15] developed by the Computer Systems Research Group (CSRG) at the University of California, Berkeley (which may well explain the name).

BSD originated when Ken Thompson [Feb 4] took a sabbatical from Bell Labs [Jan 1] in 1975 and joined Berkeley as a visiting professor. He helped install UNIX Version 6 on a PDP 11/70 [Jan 5], and started working on a Pascal compiler. Eventually graduate students Chuck Haley and Bill Joy [Nov 8] took over Thompson's Pascal, and found time to implement an improved text editor (ex), and several other tools. Several universities asked for a copy of the enhanced software, so Joy started packaging it up as a distribution.

The Second Berkeley Software Distribution (2BSD), released in May 1979, included some notable updates. Both the vi text editor (a visual version of ex) and the C shell were written by Joy. Also, in the early 1980's, BSD became the first OS to include support for Internet protocols such as TCP/IP [Jan 1].

Meanwhile, AT&T (formerly Bell) had decided to commercialize their UNIX, while BSD remained proudly open source. As a result, BSD programmers slowly rewrote the OS'es code to separate it from AT&T's clutches, which was mostly completed by the BSD Net/2 release in June 1991. Amazingly, this was the only free UNIX for several years, until version 1 of the Linux kernel came along on [March 14] 1994.

Eric S. Raymond [Dec 4] summarized the differences between BSD and AT&T's System V like so: "The divide was roughly between longhairs and shorthairs; programmers and technical people tended to line up with Berkeley and BSD, more business-oriented types with AT&T and System V."

The final Berkeley BSD release was in 1995, but the nature of its license meant that the software lived on as the basis for many other open source versions of UNIX, such as FreeBSD [Nov 1], NetBSD [May 19], and OpenBSD [May 18]. Parts of BSD were also used by Apple in OS X [March 24] and iOS [Jan 9].

An open question is why Linux became so much more successful than BSD? Some historians believe that the more loosely organized use of volunteer developers by Linux may be the reason, compared to the rather centralized group of programmers involved with BSD. This difference is often cited as an example of Raymond's "The Cathedral and the Bazaar" [May 27] models of software engineering.

## ViolaWWW Released

### March 9, 1992

ViolaWWW was probably the first graphical Web browser for UNIX machines, and very popular until the arrival of NCSA Mosaic [Sept 28] in 1993.

ViolaWWW was the first browser to support embedded scriptable objects, style sheets, document inserts (a bit like frames), and tables. It even received a glowing review from Tim Berners-Lee [June 8].

It was implemented by Pei-Yuan Wei, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, on top of a scripting language called Viola that Wei also developed. Viola stood for "Visually Interactive Object-oriented Language and Application", and was inspired by HyperCard [Aug 11].

Another contender for first graphical Web browser was Erwise, also for UNIX, released on [April 15], 1992. However, neither Erwise or ViolaWWW were the first UNIX browser; that title belongs to Nicola Pellow's Line Mode Browser [Aug 6] which was text-based.

## Zip Drives Ship

### March 9, 1995

The first Iomega Zip drives could read 3.5" Zip disks capable of holding 100 MB. Each disk cost around $20, which was incredible value for money at a time when a 3.5" floppy disk could store 1.44 MB and cost $2. Within two years, Iomega had sold ten million Zip drives.

The Iomega ZIP-100 Drive. Photo by Morn. CC BY-SA 3.0.

Later drives offered an even better dollar/MB ratio, and were able to store 250 MB and 750 MB.

The only hiccup were reports of a "click of death" affecting some drives [Jan 30]. However, what really torpedoed sales at the end of the 1990's, was the falling cost of CD-R [Sept 1] and CD-RW discs [March 10]; the arrival of USB drives [Jan 15] was the final straw.

Along the way, Iomega bravely launched several new disk formats, such as Jaz, PocketZip, and Rev, but they failed to recapture the Zip magic.

In 2006, *PC World* magazine rated the Zip drive as the 15th worst technology product of all time. However, in 2007, the same magazine rated it the 23rd best technology of all time.

Zip drives are still used by retro-computing enthusiasts since they utilize the SCSI interface [March 3] beloved by older platforms, such as the Commodore Amigas [July 23], Atari STs [Jan 10], Apple IIs [June 5], and Macs [Jan 24].

## The HTTP header "Referer:"

### March 9, 1995

John Franks sent a message to the W3C [Oct 1] mailing list pointing out that the HTTP header "Referer:" was incorrectly spelt in the HTTP 1.0 draft specification. Roy Fielding [Sept 27] responded that neither referer nor referrer were understood by the UNIX spell command. (Incidentally, that problem seems to be have been fixed, at least in my version of ispell on Ubuntu.)

The spelling originated in the proposal by Phillip Hallam-Baker to add the field to the HTTP specification. Despite the message from Franks, it was set in stone in section 10.13 of RFC 1945 in May 1996.

The current policy is that the header is called "HTTP_REFERER" and so must be spelled that way in order to be recognized. However, other Web specifications use the more traditional spelling, as in the Referrer-Policy HTTP header or in the Document Object Model (DOM).

## First NetDay

### March 9, 1996

NetDay (1995-2004) called on high-tech companies to "commit resources to schools, libraries, and clinics worldwide so that they could connect to the Internet".

The event was promoted by John Gage (then-chief science officer at Sun Microsystems [Feb 24]) and activist Michael Kaufman. The initial focus was on Californian schools, and on this day some 20,000 volunteers helped to wire up 20% of the state's schools.

President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore [Dec 9] spent the day at Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord, where they helped lay cabling in a ceiling space. Clinton made sure to mention the "Information Superhighway" [Jan 3] (probably after being reminded by Gore).


Warning: Inexpierenced sysadmins at work. Photo by US Govt.

Another NetDay was held in October in Silicon Valley as "Smart Schools NetDay II", and by the end of 2001 events had been run in 40 states. 500,000 volunteers had wired more than 75,000 classrooms.

Over the years, NetDay changed its focus from wiring to ways of using the Internet. In 2005, it merged with "Project Tomorrow" (tomorrow.org), a nonprofit involved with math and science education.

## Nintendo Party Gloves

### March 9, 2000

Nintendo agreed to provide protective gloves to approximately 1.2 million American consumer who had purchased the 1998 "Mario Party" [March 10] game for the Nintendo 64 [June 23].

This settled a complaint by the New York Attorney General's office alleging that many players had sustained injuries, ranging from friction burns and blisters, to minor lacerations as the result of rapidly rotating the controller's analogue stick.

The stick had a grooved tip and was intended to be controlled by the user's thumb. However, some players used the palms of their hand instead. The fingerless gloves had padded palms.

The cost to Nintendo may have been as much as $80 million or perhaps almost nothing, since the company only had to supply gloves to customers who requested them.

The requirement to rotate the analogue stick was removed in "Mario Party 2" (1999), and later versions of the analog stick were also redesigned.

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said at the time, "This settlement is good news for parents throughout the nation."

## Nupedia Goes Online

### March 9, 2000

Nupedia was a free online English-language encyclopedia whose articles were written by experts, and went through a seven-step review process before publication. The result of all this rigor was that just 21 articles were approved for the site in its first year.

This should be compared with Wikipedia (which began on [Jan 15] 2001) which uploaded 200 articles in its first month, and 18,000 by the end of the first year.

Nupedia was founded by Bomis, a web portal company headed by Jimmy Wales [Aug 7], with Larry Sanger as the Nupedia editor-in-chief. Wales had met Sanger on philosophy mailing lists through a shared interest in Ayn Rand [Jan 25].

When Wikipedia debuted, it was initially a side-project of Nupedia to encourage collaboration on articles before

they entered the peer review process. Wikipedia quickly developed a life of its own.

The Nupedia website was shut down on Sept. 26, 2003, and its contents were eventually absorbed into Wikipedia.