

Nov. 3rd

Gabe Logan Newell

Born: Nov. 3, 1962;
Seattle, Washington

Newell and Mike Harrington founded Valve, the video gaming and online distribution company, and led the development of Steam [Sept 12], Valve's digital distribution platform. Before that, Newell had spent thirteen years working for Microsoft, serving as a producer for Windows 1.01, 1.02, and 1.03 [Nov 10].

Inspired by Michael Abrash, who left Microsoft to work on Quake [June 22], Newell and Harrington escaped from Microsoft in 1996. Their debut product, the PC first-person shooter Half-Life, was released on [Nov 19] 1998 to critical and commercial success.



Gabe Newell (2010). Game Developers Conference. CC BY 2.0.

In recent years, Newell has criticized the Xbox Live service [Nov 14], referring to it as "a train wreck". He wasn't all that happy with Windows 8 [Oct 26] either, calling it a "catastrophe" and "a threat" to the open nature of PC gaming.

In Dec. 2010, *Forbes* magazine named Newell "A Name You Should Know."

Phillip Walter Katz

Born: Nov. 3, 1962;
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Died: April 14, 2000

Katz and Gary Conway created the Zip file format for data compression, and the associated program, PKZip. Their format is now supported by almost every compression utility.

The first version of PKZip, released in 1986, was called PKPak, after Katz's local football team, the Green Bay Packers. It utilized a file format called PKArc, based on work by Thom Henderson. Henderson's company, SEA, sued, and so PKZip was unveiled in 1989. A combination of speed, and being shareware [Nov 27], made it very popular.

Katz had a fervent dislike of Microsoft Windows, which meant that the PKZip port was slow to arrive. In the meantime, Microsoft added built-in zip support (under the name "compressed folders") to their OS from 1998.

Katz first developed PKZip at his mother's kitchen table. "It was just a hobby," he said. "I didn't expect it to turn into a business."

James Werner "Jamie" Zawinski

(or jwz)
Born: Nov. 3, 1968;
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Zawinski was one of the first employees at Mosaic Communications Corp. [March 25], later known as Netscape, and was responsible for the early UNIX versions of Netscape Navigator.

He became quite well known because of an Easter egg in the browser: typing "about:jwz" into the address box would take the user to his home page. (A similar trick worked for other Netscape programmers.)

When Netscape Communications [March 25] created the Mozilla Organization

(mozilla.org), Zawinski came up with the "Mozilla" [Jan 23] name, as a mix of "Mosaic" and "Godzilla".

Zawinski's law is: "Every program attempts to expand until it can read mail. Those programs which cannot so expand are replaced by ones which can."

Another famous quote: "Some people, when confronted with a problem, think 'I know, I'll use regular expressions.' Now they have two problems."

Here are three variations from Twitter users:

"Some programmers, when confronted with a problem, think 'I know, I'll use floating point arithmetic.' Now they have 1.9999999999997 problems." - @tomscott

"Some people, when confronted with a problem, think 'I know, I'll use multithreading'. Nothhw tpe yawrve o oblems." - @d6

"Some people, when confronted with a problem, think 'I know, I'll use versioning.' Now they have 2.1.0 problems." - @JaesCoyle

Zawinski is currently the proprietor of the "DNA Lounge", a nightclub in San Francisco. When it opened in 2001, he installed flat-screen kiosks (actually diskless Linux systems running GNOME [March 3]) to allow clubbers to browse the Web and send instant messages.

UNIX Manual Nov. 3, 1971

The first edition of the "UNIX Programmer's Manual" by Dennis Ritchie [Sept 9] and Ken Thompson [Feb 4] was published. It described over 60 commands, but it was still early days. For example, pipes [Oct 11] and tools such as grep weren't included, and there was no C compiler (but there was FORTRAN). At the time, most of the OS was coded in assembly on the PDP-11/20 [Jan 5]. However, the manual did document four games: blackjack, chess, moo (a

guessing game), and good old tic-tac-toe [Aug 25].

Of course, there was a BUGS section, which made a reference to the short life span of the 32-bit clock which counted in sixtieths of a second starting from Jan. 1, 1971: "The chronological-minded reader will note that 2**32 sixtieths of a second is only about 2.5 years."

A second edition of the manual appeared on June 12, 1972, and included the boast that "the number of UNIX installations has grown to 10, with more expected." The third edition (Feb. 1973) noted that there were now 16 installations. Indeed, UNIX only started to become more widely known after Ritchie and Thompson presented a paper about it at the fourth ACM Symposium on OS Principles on [Oct 15] 1973.

Virus Coined

Nov. 3, 1983

Fred Cohen completed writing a virus program at USC, which he later described in the paper, "Computer Viruses - Theory and Experiments", published in Jan. 1984. This made it the first documented virus, which he defined as "a program that can 'infect' other programs by modifying them to include a ... version of itself." Cohen credited his academic adviser, Leonard Adelman [Dec 31] (the A in RSA) with coining the name.

Cohen demoed his work by adding it to the 'vd' graphical directory viewer running under UNIX [Oct 25] on a VAX 11/750. The virus then exploited user permissions to spread around the system.

There had been earlier viruses of course, but they had been pranks or mischief-making rather than academic. For example, Elk Cloner [Nov 10] had received a lot of publicity in 1982. However, the very first 'virus' was probably Creeper [March 15] from 1971, or perhaps the Darwin game [Aug 00] from 1961. The second was

ANIMAL (and its cousin, PERVADE [Jan 00]) from 1974.

The claim that Cohen produced the first documented virus is open to debate, since the assembly source code for ANIMAL and PERVADE was available on UNIVAC machines [Nov 19] in the 1970's, and is still online today.

The related word, "worm," was coined by John Brunner in his novel "The Shockwave Rider" [March 00] in 1975.

Crack v4

Nov. 3, 1991

Crack was the first standalone UNIX password cracking program, and was designed to help sysadmins locate users with passwords vulnerable to dictionary attack.

Alec Muffett (1968 -), a sysadmin at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, began developing Crack in 1990 based on Dan Farmer's 'pwc' cracker that was part of COPS [Jan 31].

The first USENET release was on July 15, 1991, but Crack v4.0a, made available on this day, introduced several features that made it a formidable tool, including programmable dictionary generation and distributed password cracking. The former has become a common feature of modern cracking software, such as "John the Ripper".

In 1995, Randal L. Schwartz [Nov 22], a noted Perl programmer, was prosecuted for using Crack on a password file at Intel [July 18], but the case was eventually dropped.

Crack was also employed by Kevin Mitnick [Dec 25] when hacking into Sun Microsystems [Feb 24] in 1993. Coincidentally, Muffett had joined Sun in 1992.
