Nov. 5th

SABRE
Nov. 5, 1959

In the summer of 1953, during a ten-hour flight from Los Angeles to NYC, C.R. Smith, the president of American Airlines, and Blair Smith (unrelated), an IBM salesman, discussed ideas for a distributed, interactive real-time flight reservation system. It was later called SABRE (the Semi-Automatic Business Research Environment); they had first wanted SABER but there were copyright difficulties with that word.

A development agreement was signed on this day, and an experimental system was operational by 1960, running on two IBM 7090s based at a new data center in Briarcliff Manor, New York. Some time during 1962, the first reservation was made with the system, and the project became IBM's biggest non-government contract during the 1960's.

The design wasn't completely new, using lessons learnt from IBM's involvement in SAGE [June 26], the first major (military) system to use interactive real-time computing. Indeed, the first SABRE director was an ex-SAGE engineer, Perry Crawford.

Also, SABRE wasn't quite the first computerized airline reservations system; the Teleregister system developed by Evelyn Berezin [April 12] for United Airlines predates it by about a year.

In April 1964, SABRE's nationwide network went live and immediately became the largest commercial real-time data-processing system in the world. Via telephone lines, the system linked 1,500 terminals in 65 cities, delivering data on any flight in less than three seconds. It handled 7500 passenger reservations per hour in 1965.

In 1972, the system was migrated to IBM System/360 [April 7] systems running in a secure underground location in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Although SABRE was originally only used by American Airlines, it was opened up to travel agents in 1976. By the end of the 1980's, it was running on over 180,000 agency terminals worldwide.

Though SABRE now uses thousands of Linux servers, IBM mainframes are still at its core.

SABRE is sometimes nominated as the oldest software still in use, but that title probably belongs to MOCAS [Aug 6], a contract-management system used inside the US Dept. of Defense since 1958.

Tank
Nov. 5, 1974

Kee Games released the Tank arcade game. Two players must maneuver their tanks through a maze viewed from above while attempting to shoot each other.

Kee Games was headed by Joe Keenan, a long-time friend of Atari's [June 27] co-founder Nolan Bushnell [Feb 5]. Kee advertised itself as a competitor to Atari, but was in reality a
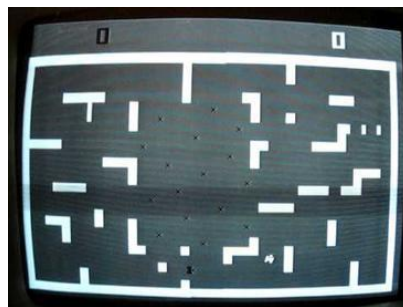

Photo of Tank gameplay; the two tanks are at the bottom of the screen. (c) Kee Games. Fair use.

wholly owned subsidiary, created to appease the arcade distributors of the time who demanded exclusivity deals.

Tank became so popular (selling over 10,000 units) that Atari merged Kee Games into the company and later released Tank under the Atari label. Also, there wasn't much point

continuing the subtefuge after Kee's true relationship to Atari became widely known in Dec. 1974.

Tank was the first game to use an integrated circuit-based ROM to store graphics data. It was designed by Steve Bristow, who had previously worked on "Computer Space" [Oct 15]. Bristow turned his prototype over to Lyle Rains to develop into a finished product, and Rains added the maze and a minefield.

Although "Gran Trak 10", released in [May 00] 1974, was the first arcade game to store data in ROM , it's ROM employed antiquated diode-based technology.

Mockingbird
Nov. 5-8, 1981

Mockingbird, the first visual editor for musicians, was presented at the 1981 International Computer Music Conference in Dallas. It was developed at Xerox PARC [July 1] by John Maxwell and Severo Ornstein [Oct 13].

Mockingbird could play scores on a synthesizer as well as display and print them in standard music notation form. It could process both graphical input and music played on a Yamaha CP-30 synthesizer keyboard.

Mockingbird was coded in Mesa, a language first developed for the Xerox Alto [March 1].

"The closest it got to serious use," noted Ornstein, "was while my father was writing his seventh piano sonata.

Q-Link Online
Nov. 5, 1985

Quantum Computer Services, at the prompting of Steve Case [Aug 21], created Quantum Link (aka Q-Link), an online service offering chat rooms, e-mail, games, and programs for the Commodore 64 [Jan 7] and 128.

Access to the service was typically via dial-up modems running at speeds ranging from 300 to 2400 baud.

Q-Link was a modified version of the PlayNET system, created by Dave Panzl and Howard Goldberg. PlayNET was the first online software to feature graphics, an advantage carried over to Q-Link.

On [June 23] 1986, Q-Link debuted the first massively multiplayer online role-playing game, Habitat, later renamed "Club Caribe". On [Nov 00] 1988, it began the first online story serial.

In [May 20] 1988, Q-Link and Apple launched the "AppleLink Personal Edition" service, and Q-Link and Tandy released the similar PC-Link in August 1988 for IBM-compatibles. At this point, Q-Link had effectively cornered the home computer online services market.

After Q-Link parted ways with Apple, it changed its name to America Online (AOL) on [Oct 2] 1989, and began to grow even bigger.

No Microsoft FUD
Nov. 5, 1990

Microsoft Vice President Brad Silverberg published an open letter in *PC Week* magazine denying that Microsoft had ever engaged in "Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt" (FUD [Nov 16]), disinformation tactics, or had stolen features from other DOS systems. Silverberg wrote, "The feature enhancements of MS-DOS version 5.0 were decided, and development was begun, long before we heard about DR DOS 5.0."

MS-DOS 5.0 [Aug 12] had been announced in May 1990 at the same time that DR DOS version 5.0 (from Gary Kildall's [May 19] Digital Research) was released. MS-DOS 5.0 was eventually released in June 1991.

On [April 17] 1992, the so-called AARD code was discovered in a pre-release version of Windows

3.1 [April 6]. It was designed to return a non-fatal error message if it detected a non-Microsoft DOS running beneath it.

Annie for CG
Nov. 5 1993

At the 21st "Annie Awards", honoring outstanding achievements in the animation field, the best commercial award went to a computer-generated series of ads for the first time: to Coca Cola's "Polar Bears", made by Sierra Hotel Productions.

The first ad in the series, "Northern Lights," debuted in February during the Academy Awards telecast. It was produced by Ken Stewart, who enlisted the help of Los Angeles-based "Rhythm & Hues" to create the animation.

Todd Shifflett, the visual effects supervisor, said: "Our most powerful computers could barely render all of the polygons, so we used lots of little technical tricks to pull it off and make the bears look furry without being able to actually render fur."

Coca-Cola's association with polar bears dates back to a print advertisement which first appeared in France in 1922.

UK Intervasion
Nov. 5, 1994

The "Intervasion of the UK" was the first use of the Internet as a weapon of civil disobedience. (Coincidentally, this day is also "Guy Fawkes Night" in the UK.)

It was triggered by the passing of the UK Criminal Justice and Public Order Act on Nov. 3, which sought (amongst many other things) to outlaw illegal outdoor dance festivals (raves). The offending music was defined as "wholly or predominantly characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats".

The protest was organized by a group called "The Zippies" from San Francisco's "181 Club".

"Zippies" stands for ""Zen inspired pronoia professionals," and was coined by Jules Marshall in an article in the May 1994 issue of *Wired* magazine [Jan 2].

The protest inundated various UK government websites with enormous volumes of e-mail, which caused many of them to go off line for at least a week.

"This will do for the Internet, what Tiananmen Square did for the fax machine", read one of the Intervasion flyers, distributed via e-mail of course.

A quieter form of protest occurred on one of the tracks on Orbital's "Are We Here?" EP, entitled "Criminal Justice Bill?". It consisted of four minutes of silence.

For more online activism, see [Jan 18], [April 10], [Oct 4].

US vs. Microsoft Findings
Nov. 5, 1999

Prev: [May 18] Next: [April 3]

In the case of US v. Microsoft, Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson issued his findings.

Bill Gates giving his deposition during US vs. Microsoft (Aug, 27. 1998). Photo by the US Department of Justice.

In the two hundred page document, Jackson ruled that Microsoft had indeed obtained monopolistic control over the PC OS market, and had engaged in anti-competitive behavior. The court papers also characterized

Bill Gates' [Oct 28] testimony as "bizarre" and "not credible."

Jackson's conclusions and remedy wouldn't appear until [April 3] of the next year, which was coincidentally after Gates had stepped down as CEO. He had transitioned into the newly created role of "chief software architect." [Jan 13].

Linux Attacked
Nov. 5, 2003

In 2003, the Linux kernel's source code was safely stored in BitKeeper, and a second copy was held in CVS. (BitKeeper and CVS are version control systems.)

On this day, Larry McVoy noticed that there had been a code change in the CVS copy that lacked an approval record. Stranger yet, this change did not appear in the primary BitKeeper repository. Further investigation determined that someone had apparently broken into the CVS server and inserted two lines of code into the wait4() function:

```
if ((options ==
        (__WCLONE|__WALL)) &&
    (current->uid = 0))
      retval = -EINVAL;
```

The end of the test uses "= 0" rather than "== 0", which will set the user ID to zero (i.e. turn it into the "root" user). This would give root privileges to any software that called wait4() in this particular way.

Call of Duty 4
Nov. 5, 2007

"Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" is a first-person shooter developed by Infinity Ward and published by Activision [April 25]. It was released for the PlayStation 3 [Nov 11], Xbox 360 [Nov 22], and Microsoft Windows, and sold over 13 million copies during its first two years of release.

The game breaks away from the WWII settings of previous entries and takes place in the near-future (2011), with some surprising plot twists and themes. Many people consider it the game that started making first-person multiplayer console shooters popular.

A later entry in the series, "Modern Warfare 3," sold 8.8 million copies in its first month alone, becoming the fastest selling game of all time. The previous record holder was another game in the series, "Call of Duty: Black Ops".

Android
Nov. 5, 2007

Google launched Android version 1.0 beta during an event marking the formation of the "Open Handset Alliance". On [Sept 23] 2008, the first Android smartphone was announced – the T-Mobile G1, also known as the HTC [May 15] Dream.

Android is based on the Linux kernel, which means it can be employed by third-party smartphone manufacturers for free. It was initially developed outside Google by Andy Rubin, Rich Miner, Nick Sears, and Chris White, but Google bought their company on [Aug 17] 2005.

Subsequent Android releases up to version 10 were named after desserts, strolling leisurely through the alphabet: Éclair, Honeycomb, Ice Cream Sandwich, KitKat [March 18], Lollipop, Marshmallow, Nougat, Oreo, and Pie (Android 9). The official reason for the codenames was: "Since these devices make our lives so sweet, each Android version is named after a dessert."

Google explained its dropping of the desserts whimsy as: "We think this change helps make release names simpler and more intuitive for our global community." However, internal files for that version referred to "qt", which was rumored to be an abbreviation for "Quince tart".

Android 8 (Oreo) introduced a more modular architecture, but is also remembered for the isUserAMonkey() method in the ActivityManager class which returns true if the user interface is currently being messed with by a monkey.

Android 11 was formerly released on Sept. 8, 2020, and Android VP of engineering Dave Burke revealed that its internal codename was "Red Velvet Cake"

Red Velvet Cake, prepared by Waldorf Astoria New York. Photo by Hennem08. CC BY-SA 3.0.

In the past Google placed a Styrofoam statue representing that codename on the lawn in front of the company's Visitor Center in Mountain View. Due to 2020's COVID outbreak, Android 11's statue is only virtual, viewable via Android's augmented reality software, ARCore, when pointed at the center's lawn. The statue appears to be a boring "11", but taped to its base is a recipe for making red velvet cake.

The green Android logo was created by graphic designer Irina Blok in 2007. Her team found inspiration from the symbols on restroom doors, modified into the shape of a robot.