

Nov. 25th

## Philipp Matthäus Hahn

**Born: Nov. 25, 1739;**

Scharnhausen, Germany

Died: May 2, 1790

Hahn was a priest and also a renowned clockmaker and inventor. He designed the first popular mechanical calculator based on Leibniz's Stepped Reckoner [July 1], which he first got working in 1773, although he spent a few more years making the tens-carry mechanism reliable, partly by reshaping the rectangular machine to be circular. Hahn's primary inspiration was to apply his ideas to simplifying the construction of a large astronomical clock, called the "Ludwigsburger Weltmaschine".

Hahn explained his design in the magazine *Der Teutschen Merkur* (*The German Mercury*, 1779, No. 2), which probably influenced a similar but improved calculator design by Johann Helfrich von Müller [Jan 16]. In fact, Hahn subsequently accused Müller of stealing his work, but Müller denied it.

One of his patrons, Herzog Carl Eugen von Württemberg, called Hahn "the watchmaker God".

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## Charles (Chuck) Ingerham Peddle

**Born: Nov. 25, 1937;**

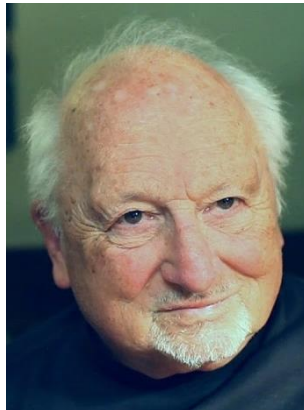
Bangor, Maine

Died: Dec. 15, 2019

Peddle was the main designer of the MOS 6502 chip [Sept 16], and used it to develop the KIM-1 [April 00], and its better known successor, the Commodore PET [April 15].

In the early 1970's, Peddle had worked on Motorola's expensive (\$300) 6800 processor [March 7], and afterwards wanted to design a cheaper alternative. Management was less than

supportive, so he, Bill Mensch [Feb 9], and five others, left for MOS Technology [Sept 9], where Peddle headed a team working on the 650x family of processors. The most famous member of that family was the 6502, released in 1976, which could be purchased for roughly 15% of the price of an Intel 8080 [April 18]. Not surprisingly, it soon found use in a multitude of products, including the Apple II [June 5], VIC-20 [May 00], NES [Oct 18], Atari 8-bit computers [Nov 00], many arcade games, and the BBC Micro [Dec 1].



Chuck Peddle (2013). Photo by Jason Scott. CC BY 2.0.

Commodore's founder, Jack Tramiel [Dec 13], was a tough man to work for, and Peddle briefly quit twice in the late 1970's. The first time (1978), he went to work for Steve Jobs [Feb 24] at Apple, as the Lead Development Engineer for the Lisa [Jan 19]. After a few months he returned to Commodore.

In 1982, BYTE magazine said, "More than any other person Chuck Peddle deserves to be called the founder of the personal computer industry".

Peddle's original family name was "Piddle", derived from the River Piddle in the UK. After moving to Canada, his grandfather discovered that "piddle" was slang for urination, so changed their name.

## EPICAC

**Nov. 25, 1950**

"EPICAC" is a short story by Kurt Vonnegut which was published on this day in *Collier's Weekly*.

EPICAC is the largest, smartest computer on Earth, and is given the part-time job of writing poetry for the story's narrator (and EPICAC operator) to give to Pat, his girlfriend. An unintended side-effect is that EPICAC learns to love Pat, but also realizes that she cannot reciprocate that love for a mere machine. EPICAC short-circuiting himself to end the misery.

The story was published four years after ENIAC was unveiled [Feb 15], but the EPICAC name may also refer to "Syrup of Ipecac", once used as a cough syrup and to induce vomiting.

The story was adapted by Rod Serling and Bernard Schoenfeld for a 1964 episode of "The Twilight Zone," entitled "From Agnes - with Love", and again in 1974 in "Rex Harrison Presents Stories of Love", a pilot for an anthology TV series.

EPICAC also turned up in Vonnegut's novel "Player Piano" (1952).

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## Hironobu Sakaguchi

**Born: Nov. 25, 1962;**

Hitachi, Ibaraki, Japan

Sakaguchi sketched out the initial concepts for the "Final Fantasy" series, and produced several entries in the franchise.

He had wanted to make a role-playing game for some time, inspired by Ultima [Sept 2]; [Aug 24] and Wizardry [Sept 00], but his employer Square only agreed after the commercial success of "Dragon Quest" [May 27].

Sakaguchi brought on board fellow game designers Koichi Ishii and Akitoshi Kawazu. Kawazu was mainly responsible

for the battle system, while Ishii added the notion of four crystals, governing earth, air, fire, and water.

Sakaguchi made his debut as a film director with "Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within" (2001). It was both the first photorealistic computer-animated feature, and the most expensive video game-inspired movie at the time. Despite some positive reviews, the film did poorly at the box-office.

During the 2015 Game Developers Conference, a mock video presentation explained how the success of "Final Fantasy" had prevented Sakaguchi from pursuing his life-long dream of becoming a hip-hop artist.

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## Word Processor of the Gods

Nov. 25, 1984

The short story, "The Word Processor", by Stephen King [March 14], was published in the Jan. 1983 issue of *Playboy* magazine [May 20], probably making it the earliest fictional treatment of word processing.

The story was later retitled "Word Processor of the Gods" and appeared in King's 1985 collection "Skeleton Crew". It was also adapted into an episode of the "Tales from the Darkside" TV series, first broadcast on this day.

A 1980's picture of King in his office gives an indication of his word processing setup at the time – behind him, on a large desk, is probably a Wang OIS (Office Information System) 125A [Feb 7], and its accompanying 5536 terminal. The OIS supported numerous peripherals, including printers, and disk and tape drives, and could be programmed using Wang BASIC, Z80 assembler, or PL/M-80 [May 19].

King's large Wang also featured in the novel, "Pattern Recognition" (2003) by William Gibson [Sept 3]. A dealer in old

computers talks of being in negotiation with King to buy the machine. However, a real-world collector would be out of luck. King shipped his Wang to California in the late 1990's for data retrieval, and never got it back.

The machine described in "The Word Processor" story is built from assorted spare parts of no particular brand, which might explain its magical capabilities.

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