

Reynold (Rey) B. Johnson

Born 1906, Minnesota,--Johnson devised a method for scoring multiple-choice tests by sensing conductive pencil marks on answer sheets, and initiated work leading to the first disk storage device.



Education: University of Minnesota.

Professional Experience high school teacher; IBM Corp., 1934-1971; founder, Education Engineering Associates Laboratory, Palo Alto, Calif., 1971-present.

Honors and Awards: IEEE Computer Society Pioneer Award, 1980; National Medal of Technology, 1986.

While a high school teacher in Michigan in 1931, Johnson devised a novel method for scoring multiple-choice tests by sensing conductive pencil marks on answer sheets; his method was subsequently purchased by IBM. He joined IBM as an engineer and was first head (1952) of the IBM San Jose Laboratory.¹ He created the IBM 805 Test Scoring Machine in 1937. After opening the San Jose Laboratory, Johnson initiated work leading to the first disk storage device in 1955, first used with the IBM RAMAC² computer. The storage device had a 24-inch-diameter magnetic-oxide-coated disk on a vertical spindle.

QUOTATION

About Johnson: “Rey Johnson had some sort of magical combination of personal creativity and unorthodox management techniques.” (Louis D. Stevens)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

Caddes, Carolyn, *Portraits of Success: Impressions of Silicon Valley Pioneers*, Tioga Publishing Co., Palo Alto, Calif., 1986.

¹ Based on Pugh, Emerson W., Lyle R. Johnson, and John H. Palmer, *IBM's 360 and Early 370 Systems*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991.

² Random Access Method of Accounting and Control.

UPDATES

Reynold Johnson died September 15, 1998. (MRW 2012) Portrait inserted (MRW, 2013)