

Biography of Terry A. Davis – The Mad Programmer behind TempleOS

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Introduction

Terrence Andrew Davis (15 December 1969 – 11 August 2018) was an American programmer who alone created TempleOS, a biblical-themed operating system, which he claimed to be God's Third Temple.



Logo of TempleOS from TempleOS.org

Early Life and Career

Davis was born in West Allis, Wisconsin. As a teenager, he learned assembly language on a Commodore 64 home computer. Davis received his master's degree in electrical engineering from Arizona State University in 1994 and worked for several years as a VAX machine programmer for Ticketmaster.

Mental Illness

Since 1996, Davis was admitted to a psychiatric ward several times due to his reoccurring manic episodes. He began developing delusions of space aliens and government agents he thought were following him. Davis was initially diagnosed with

bipolar disorder, and later schizophrenia. He remained unemployed throughout the rest of his life due to his illness.



Picture of Terry A. Davis from Wikimedia Commons

Religious Views

Davis was raised Catholic but was an atheist during his early adult life until he experienced what he called a "revelation from God". "I thought the brain was a computer," Davis said, "And so I had no need for a soul." He saw himself as a scientific materialist. He considered himself scientifically minded. "Today I find the people most similar to me are atheist-scientist people," he said. "The difference is God has talked to me, so I'm basically like an atheist who God has talked to."

TempleOS

TempleOS (formerly J Operating System, LoseThos, and SparrowOS) is a Christianity-themed lightweight operating system designed by Terry A. Davis to be the Third Temple prophesied in the Bible. He developed it alone for a decade after experiencing a series of manic episodes which he later claimed to a revelation from God.

Davis conceived the idea of creating an operating system in the early 2000s. Over the course of a decade, Davis alone designed original programming language, editor, compiler, and kernel for his operating system, ultimately writing more than 100,000 lines of code.

In 2005, Davis expressed that his goal for the J Operating System was "to recreate the dynamic environment that used to exist when the Commodore 64 was around and everyone was creating odd-ball software". He envisioned the system as a Commodore 64 with a "thousand times" more powerful processing speed. After three years, he

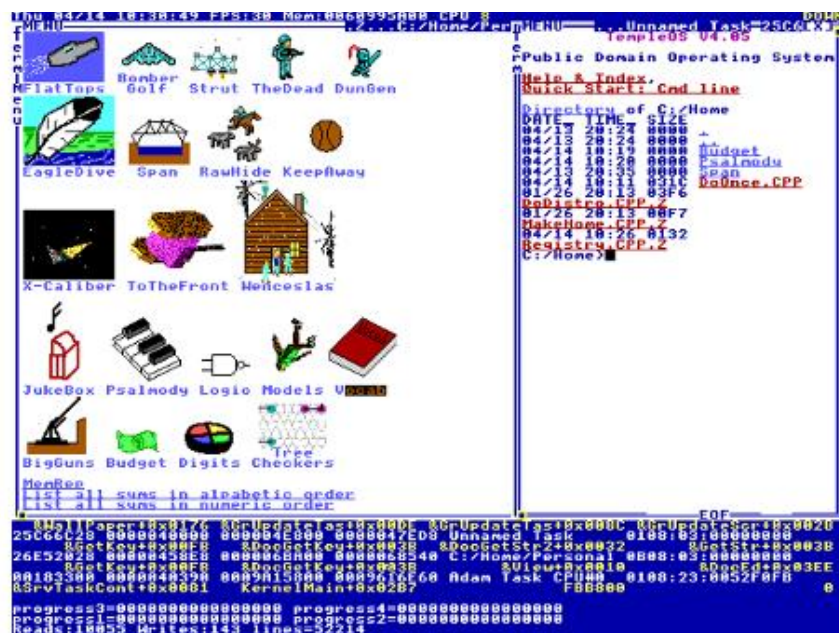
wrote that the primary purpose of LoseThos was "for making video games. It has no networking or Internet support. As far as I'm concerned, that would be reinventing the wheel".

Davis later claimed that he was in direct communication with God, and that God told him to create, according to the TempleOS charter, "God's official temple. Just like Solomon's temple, this is a community focalpoint where offerings are made and God's oracle is consulted."

TempleOS is an open source 64-bit PC operating system with an interface similar to Commodore 64 and other DOS-based interfaces. The system runs at 640x480 VGA with 16 colors, which, according to Davis, "is a covenant like circumcision," making it easier for children to draw illustrations for God. Like many other features of the system, Davis claimed that they were explicit instructions from God.

TempleOS was written in HolyC, a programming language Davis developed that is between C and C++, formerly named C†. HolyC is also the operating system's shell language, making it possible to write and execute applications within the shell. Furthermore, the Integrated Development Environment that came with TempleOS supports features like embedding images in code. The IDE utilizes DoIDoc, a non-standard text format that supports embedding hyperlinks, images, and 3D meshes into standard ASCII files.

Inside the operating system include 2D games and 3D games along with other applications created by Davis.



User Interface of TempleOS from Channel Futures

Death

Davis struggled with homelessness and incarceration during his final months. He had stopped taking medication which he believed would hamper with his creativity. On the evening of 11 August 2018, Davis was struck and killed by a train while walking along the railway tracks in The Dalles, Oregon.

Reception and Legacy

John McColl, a computer engineer from Sydney, Australia, said he hoped Davis would be remembered for his achievements rather than his mental illness. He said it was "kind of hard for a lay person to understand what a phenomenal achievement" it is to write an entire operating system singlehandedly. "It actually boggles my mind that one man wrote all that." He compared it to construction, saying a man could build a house by himself, but this was "like building a skyscraper by yourself."

Blue, a computer engineer from Phoenix, said Davis's operating system runs on a very specific part of a computer processor and is something unique that no one else has done before. "It's extremely quick. It's very fast. It can only do a few things but what it does it does very quickly."

In the wake of Terry A. Davis' passing his family has requested supporters of his donate to "organizations working to ease the pain and suffering caused by mental illness" such as The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation and National Alliance on Mental Illness.

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