

INVENTOR & MAKER OF THE WEEK

Margaret Hamilton

PIONEER OF NASA INFLIGHT SOFTWARE FOR MOON LANDINGS

Margaret Hamilton was born in 1936 and grew up in the American Midwest. She always loved maths and started her career developing computer software at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

When NASA set out to land people on the moon for the first time, she joined the mission. Hamilton became the lead computer programmer on Apollo's groundbreaking onboard flight software. She led the team that wrote the code behind landing astronauts on the moon for the first time in 1969.

Hamilton sometimes took her daughter Lauren to work with her. One day when Lauren was four she pressed some buttons she shouldn't have and crashed the space simulator! Hamilton realised this could happen in real life, but NASA said astronauts would never make that mistake. Then on Apollo 8 an astronaut did exactly the same thing. Hamilton's team fixed the problem and made the software even safer.

Hamilton is also said to have coined the term 'software engineering' which gave computer programming the recognition and respect it deserved.

