Legends in our Time™

Volume 1
Bill Gates

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Welcome to our first edition of 'Legends in our Time', a series dedicated to celebrating extraordinary individuals during their lifetimes and ours who have excelled in their fields and left a unique, exceptional, and distinctive mark that forever changed their discipline and our lives. Future professions might include: acting, arts, business, fashion, film direction, health care, investments, literature, music, public service, radio, sports, and TV. With Bill Gates, the craft is technology and clearly one that he has mastered. By starting this series with Bill, we have intentionally raised the bar to an exceptionally high point. We will examine his accomplishments, his journey to the top and bring you an exclusive interview with Bill.

Has anyone not heard of Bill Gates? Probably not if you reside in any modern country, or if you reside in a third world country where his foundation is directly working to cure malaria. He is the richest man in the world and the head of the largest and most successful software company on the planet. How did he come to this position and how did his company come so far and so fast? As I write this, on Microsoft Word, I realize that I use at least three Microsoft programs almost every day of my life, while some use four or five Microsoft apps per day. Therein lies the answer. If you build great software, customers will buy and adopt your products. If you continue to improve on that software, customers will buy again. After all, Bill Gates did not invent the computer or the word processor or the spreadsheet. What he did was make them either more affordable or better.

What is genius? I believe that genius involves more than pure intellect. It also requires the ability to collectively process the environment in new ways to create that which did not formerly exist or to move in directions not formerly explored. For example, it was Alexander Graham Bell's attention to his environment that led him to notice that a contact screw, in his invention, which was set too tight, was the magic ingredient that allowed current to run continuously, an essential ingredient needed to transmit speech. Both Elisha Gray, a competitor, and Bell simultaneously were feverishly working on inventing the telephone, but Bell's background in acoustics and his processing of his environment is the reason he is known and Gray is not.

Paul Allen and Bill Gates at an ASR-33 teletype in the computer room at Lakeside School, Seattle WA. 1968

In the realm of personal computing, it's important to note that there were huge powerful players when Microsoft was started. IBM with their large mainframe computers and DEC with their microcomputers ruled. Both companies had invested in scalable architectures that ran the same operating system across all sizes of the computers they produced. While this created compatibility across