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and so they turned



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The Evolution of the PC and Microsoft Kasey Anderson 2/21/97 Computer Tech.

ESSAY Xerox, Apple, IBM, and Compaq all played major roles in the development of the Personal Computer, or PC, and the success of Microsoft. Though it may seem so, the computer industry did not just pop-up overnight. It took many years of dedication, hard-work, and most importantly, the ability to turn the personal computer from a machine the size of a Buick, used only by zit-faced nerds, to the very machine I am typing this report on. Xerox started everything off by creating the first personal computer, the ALTO, in 1973. However, Xerox did not release the computer because they did not think that was the direction the industry was going. This was the first of many mistakes Xerox would make in the next two decades.

So, in 1975, Ed Roberts built the Altair 80800, which is largely regarded as the first PC. However, the Altair really served no real purpose. This left computer-lovers still yearning for the perfect PC...actually, it didn't have to be perfect, most nerds just wanted their computer to do SOMETHING. The burning need for a PC was met in 1977, when Apple, a company formed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, released its Apple II.

Now the nerds were satisfied, but that wasn't enough. In order to catapult the PC into a big-time product, Apple needed to make it marketable to the average Joe. This was made possible by Visical, the home spread sheet. The Apple II was now a true-blue product. In order to compete with Apple's success, IBM needed something to set its product apart from the others. So they developed a process called open architecture.

Open architecture meant buying all the components separately, piecing them together, and then slapping the IBM name on it. It was quite effective. Now all IBM needed was software. Enter Bill Gates. Gates, along with buddy Paul Allen, had started a software company called Microsoft. Gates was one of two major contenders for IBM.

The other was a man named Gary Kildall. IBM came to Kildall first, but he turned them away (He has yet to stop kicking himself) and so they turned to Big Bad Bill Gates and Microsoft. Microsoft would continue supplying IBM with software until IBM insisted Microsoft develop Q/DOS, which was compatible only with IBM equipment. Microsoft was also engineering Windows, their own separate software, but IBM wanted Q/DOS.

By this time, PC clones were popping up all over. The most effective clone was the Compaq. Compaq introduced the first BIOS (Basic Input-Output System) chip. The spearheaded a clone market that not only used DOS, but later Windows as well, beginning the incredible success of Microsoft. With all of these clones, Apple was in dire need of something new and spectacular.

So when Steve Jobs got invited to Xerox to check out some new systems (big mistake), he began drooling profusely. There he saw the GUI (graphical user interface), and immediately fell in love. So, naturally, Xerox invited him back a second time (BBBBIIIIIGGGG mistake) and he was allowed to bring his team of engineers.

Apple did the obvious and stole the GUI from Xerox. After his own computer, the LISA, flopped, Jobs latched on to the project of one of his engineers. In

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1984, the Apple Macintosh was born. Jobs, not wanting to burden his employees with accolades, accepted all of the credit. Even with the coveted GUI, Apple still needed a good application. And who do you call when you need software? Big Bad Bill Gates. Microsoft designed desktop publishing for Apple.

However, at the same time, Gates was peeking over Jobs's shoulder to get some hints to help along with the Windows production. About the same time, IBM had Microsoft design OS/2 for them so they could close the market for clones by closing their architecture. This was the last straw for Microsoft. They designed OS/2 and then split with IBM to concentrate fully on Windows. The first few versions of Windows were only mediocre, but Windows 3.0 was the answer to what everyone wanted.

However, it did not have its own operating system, something that Windows 95 does. 3.0 sold 30 million copies in its first year, propelling Microsoft to success. So, neither the PC industry nor Microsoft was built overnight. Each owes a lot to several different people and companies. Isn't it amazing that so much has developed in just twenty-three years? Here's something even more amazing.

Remember the ALTO? Guess what it had... a GUI, a mouse, a networking system, everything. So maybe we haven't come all that far.