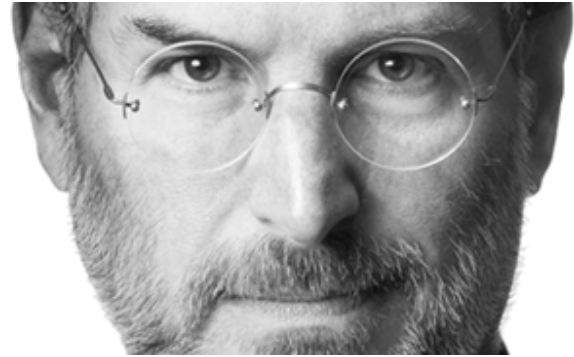


Steve Jobs

1955-2011



By David Beagan

I was never a big fan of Steve Jobs. I only ever bought one Apple product, and stopped using it after a while. The so-called design genius, left me indifferent -- his products seemed stark, colorless, and practically antiseptic looking. Stories were told of Steve haranguing his employees with intimidation to make some new device even better, he pushed people to the limit to produce his vision of perfection. Stories were legendary. It was said that employees were afraid of running into Jobs in an elevator for fear they would be fired.

In the early days, it was the genius of Steve Wozniak, the other Steve, who designed the Apple I and Apple II computers, that got Apple started. The Apple II made the company into a commercial star. What was Job's contribution? I saw Apple products as overpriced, using their marketing to establish a cult-like following. Jobs marketing moniker, "insanely great" just seemed like some half-baked hyperbole.

Job's Apple sued Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard for copyright infringement for use of the graphical user interface. This was the same graphical user interface Steve Jobs apparently took from Xerox corporation when he visited the Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center.

Over time, I started to "Think Different." I came to recognize the genius that was Steve Jobs. In fact it was a genius that perfectly complemented that of Steve Wozniak. That first big contract for 100 Apple I computers was won by Jobs. And as Apple became the great American success story, he was guiding and evangelizing for the company. Wozniak said, "If there was anything that neither one of us knew how to do, Steve would do it. He'd just find a way to do it. He was just gung-ho and pressing for this company to be successful."

It is cliché to say that someone who dies young, lived life more fully in their short number of years than others who lived to old age. In this case, I think it applies. I have often wondered what might constitute a great life. Yes, fortune, fame, and a life of comfort, would be what many would dream of -- but that would only last for a while.

Studies show that most lottery winners return to their general state of happiness they had before becoming lottery winners. And most people who achieve fame spend their time running away from it longing to be able to walk the streets in peace like normal people. While Jobs had fame and fortune, he had much more. Jobs said, "I was lucky, I found what I loved to do early in life." Throughout his life he took on challenges, sometimes failing, and learning from the failures and achieving great successes. In 1985 Jobs was ousted from the company he built and loved. Wandering aimlessly for months, but then he found that he was free of the burdens of leadership and was able to have one of the most creative periods of his life. He founded Pixar from a company he bought, Graphics Group. Pixar produced the wildly successful animated movie Toy Story, and was purchased by The Walt Disney Company for 7.4 billion dollars in 2006. He also started NeXT corporation which was sold to Apple spearheading Jobs triumphant return. Jobs ascended to chief executive and continued building the company into the great American success story that it has become.

Under Jobs leadership and vision, Apple developed products like iPod, iPhone, Mac Air, and iPad, were commercial successes and industry leaders in terms of design and features. Apple's iTunes store took online music from a clandestine hacker's enterprise to a viable business and demonstrating that a digital marketplace could replace the previous generation of physically based media.

He lived with a cancer diagnosis for seven years and according to accounts he pushed forward as best he could leading Apple and preparing it for a future without him. Jobs genius was his ability to envision something new and see that it come to fruition both technically and artistically. Will he will be remembered the same way we remember Thomas Edison and Henry Ford? Probably not, but he will be known as a great innovator and daring executor of new ideas and technology. He will be remembered as a founding father of the personal computer industry.