

(Eds: With BC-US--Apple-Jobs). For global distribution.

JORDAN ROBERTSON - AP Technology Writer - Associated Press

Steve Jobs started Apple Computer with a high school friend in a Silicon Valley garage in 1976, was forced out a decade later and later returned to rescue the company. During his second stint with the company, Apple grew into the most valuable technology company in the world.

Jobs invented and masterfully marketed ever-sleeker gadgets that transformed everyday technology, from the personal computer to the iPod and iPhone. Cultivating Apple's countercultural sensibility and a minimalist design ethic, he rolled out one sensational product after another, even in the face of the late-2000s recession and his own failing health.

Jobs helped change computers from a geeky hobbyist's obsession to a necessity of modern life at work and home, and in the process he upended not just personal technology but the mobile phone and music industries.

Perhaps most influentially, Jobs in 2001 launched the iPod, which offered "1,000 songs in your pocket." Over the next 10 years, its white earphones and thumb-dial control seemed to become as ubiquitous as the wristwatch.

In 2007 came the touch-screen iPhone, and later its miniature "apps," which made the phone a device not just for making calls but for managing money, storing photos, playing games and browsing the Web.

And in 2010, Jobs introduced the iPad, a tablet-sized, all-touch computer that took off even though market analysts said no one really needed one.

Earlier this month, Apple briefly surpassed Exxon Mobil as the most valuable company in America, with Apple stock on the open market worth more than other company's.

Under Jobs, the company cloaked itself in secrecy to build frenzied anticipation for each of its new products. Jobs himself had a wizardly sense of what his customers wanted, and where demand didn't exist, he leveraged a cult-like following to create it.

When he spoke at Apple presentations, almost always in faded blue jeans, sneakers and a black mock turtleneck, legions of Apple acolytes listened to every word. He often boasted about Apple successes, then coyly added a coda — "One more thing" — before introducing its latest ambitious idea.

In recent years, Apple investors also watched these appearances for clues about his

health.

In 2004, Jobs revealed that he had been diagnosed with — and "cured" of — a rare form of operable pancreatic cancer called an islet cell neuroendocrine tumor. In early 2009, it became clear he was again ill.

Jobs took a half-year medical leave of absence starting in January 2009, during which he had a liver transplant. Last January, he announced another medical leave, his third, with no set duration. He returned to the spotlight briefly in March to personally unveil a second-generation iPad.

Jobs grew up in California and after finishing high school enrolled in Reed College in Portland, Oregon, but dropped out after a semester.

"All of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it," he said at a Stanford University commencement address in 2005. "I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out."

When he returned to California in 1974, Jobs worked for video game maker Atari and attended meetings of a local computer club with Steve Wozniak, a high school friend who was a few years older.

Wozniak's homemade computer drew attention from other enthusiasts, but Jobs saw its potential far beyond the geeky hobbyists of the time. The pair started Apple in Jobs' parents' garage in 1976. Their first creation was the Apple I — essentially, the guts of a computer without a case, keyboard or monitor.

The Apple II, which hit the market in 1977, was their first machine for the masses. It became so popular that Jobs was worth \$100 million by age 25. Time magazine put him on its cover for the first time in 1982.

During a 1979 visit to the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, Jobs again spotted mass potential in a niche invention: a computer that allowed people to access files and control programs with the click of a mouse, not typed commands. He returned to Apple and ordered the team to copy what he had seen.

It foreshadowed a propensity to take other people's concepts, improve on them and spin them into wildly successful products. Under Jobs, Apple didn't invent computers, digital music players or smartphones — it reinvented them for people who didn't want to learn computer programming or negotiate the technical hassles of keeping their gadgets working.

"We have always been shameless about stealing great ideas," Jobs said in an interview for the 1996 PBS series "Triumph of the Nerds."

The engineers responded with two computers. The pricier one, called Lisa, launched to a cool reception in 1983. A less-expensive model called the Macintosh, exploded onto the scene in 1984.

The Mac was heralded by an epic Super Bowl commercial that referenced George Orwell's "1984" and captured Apple's iconoclastic style. In the ad, expressionless drones marched through dark halls to an auditorium where a Big Brother-like figure lectures on a big screen. A woman in a bright track uniform burst into the hall and launched a hammer into the screen, which exploded, stunning the drones, as a narrator announced the arrival of the Mac.

There were early stumbles at Apple. Jobs clashed with colleagues and even the CEO he had hired away from Pepsi, John Sculley. And after an initial spike, Mac sales slowed, in part because few programs had been written for the new graphical user interface.

Meanwhile, Microsoft copied the Mac approach and introduced Windows, outmaneuvering Apple by licensing its software to slews of computer makers.

With Apple's stock price sinking, conflicts between Jobs and Sculley mounted. Sculley won over the board in 1985 and pushed Jobs out of his day-to-day role leading the Macintosh team. Jobs resigned his post as chairman of the board and left Apple within months.

"What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating," Jobs said in his Stanford speech. "I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life."

He got into two other companies: Next, a computer maker, and Pixar, a computer-animation studio that he bought from George Lucas for \$10 million.

Pixar, ultimately the more successful venture, seemed at first a bottomless money pit. Then came "Toy Story," the first computer-animated full-length feature. Jobs used its success to negotiate a sweeter deal with Disney for Pixar's next two films. In 2006, Jobs sold Pixar to The Walt Disney Co. for \$7.4 billion in stock, making him Disney's largest individual shareholder and securing a seat on the board.

With Next, Jobs was said to be obsessive about the tiniest details of the cube-shaped computer, insisting on design perfection even for the machine's guts. He never managed to spark much demand for the machine, which cost a pricey \$6,500 to \$10,000.

Ultimately, he shifted the focus to software — a move that paid off later when Apple bought Next for its operating system technology, the basis for the software still used in Mac computers.

By 1996, when Apple bought Next, Apple was in dire financial straits. It had lost more than \$800 million in a year, was slow in licensing Mac software for other computers and surrendered most of its market share to PCs that ran Windows.

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

Larry Ellison, Jobs' close friend and fellow Silicon Valley billionaire and the leader of Oracle Corp., publicly contemplated buying Apple in early 1997 and ousting its leadership. The idea fizzled, but Jobs stepped in as interim chief later that year.

He slashed unprofitable projects, narrowed the company's focus and presided over a new marketing push to set the Mac apart from Windows, starting with a campaign encouraging computer users to "Think different."

Apple's first new product under his direction, the brightly colored, plastic iMac, launched in 1998 and sold about 2 million in its first year.

Jobs later dropped the "interim" from his title. He changed his style, too, said Tim Bajarin, who met Jobs several times while covering the company for Creative Strategies.

"In the early days, he was in charge of every detail. The only way you could say it is, he was kind of a control freak," he said. In his second stint, "he clearly was much more mellow and more mature."

In the decade that followed, Jobs returned Apple to profitability while pushing out an impressive roster of new products.

Apple's popularity exploded in the 2000s. The iPod, smaller and sleeker with each generation, introduced many lifelong Windows users to their first Apple gadget.

iTunes gave people a convenient way to buy music legally online, song by song. For the music industry, it was a mixed blessing. The industry got a way to reach Internet-savvy people who, in the age of Napster, were growing accustomed to downloading music free. But online sales also hastened the demise of CDs and established Apple as a gatekeeper, resulting in battles between Jobs and music executives over pricing and other issues.

Jobs' command over gadget lovers and pop culture swelled to the point that, on the eve of the iPhone's launch in 2007, faithful followers slept on sidewalks outside posh Apple stores for the chance to buy one. Three years later, at the iPad's debut, the lines snaked around blocks and out through parking lots, even though people had the option to order one in advance.

Jobs' personal ethos — he is a natural food lover who embraced Buddhism and New Age philosophy — was closely linked to the public persona he shaped for Apple.

Apple itself became a statement against the commoditization of technology — a cynical view, to be sure, from a company whose computers can cost three or more times as much as those of its rivals.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/30/2014 - 2:29am):

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