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Who Is Bill Gates?



by Patricia Brennan Demuth

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by Patricia Brennan Demuth
illustrated by Ted Hammond

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For Rite, my sister of generous heart and musical soul—PBD
For Stephanie and Jason—TH

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Who Is Bill Gates?



In 1980, some businessmen arrived at a small company named Microsoft. They had come to meet the president, a man named Bill Gates.

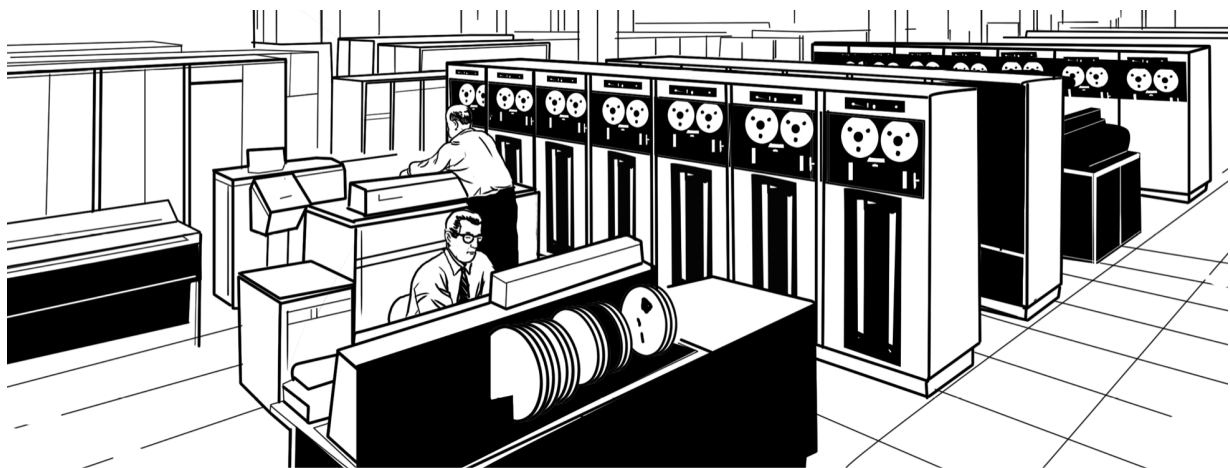
Dressed in suits, white shirts, and ties, and carrying briefcases, the men looked important. And they were. They were executives from IBM (International Business

Machines). At that time IBM was the largest maker of computers in the world.

When a young guy showed up, the men asked him the way to Bill Gates's office. The guy led them there. A moment later, he took his seat behind the desk! He was Bill Gates, the head of Microsoft!

At that time, Bill Gates was just twenty-four years old. He looked even younger. His mop of hair, owl glasses, freckles, and pullover sweater made him look like a teenager. But once Bill started talking, the IBM men were impressed. They could see that Bill knew computers—inside and out.

The computers that IBM made were huge. Some of them took up entire rooms! Big companies and government departments bought them. Very few people had personal computers. Small computers were just starting to be made. That's why IBM was visiting Microsoft. It was a young company that specialized in small computers.



Before long, IBM made a deal with Bill Gates and Microsoft. He didn't know it then, but the deal with IBM would start a whole new era in the world of computers. It would also lead to Bill becoming the richest man on earth.

Chapter 1

Young Thinker

William Henry Gates III was born on October 28, 1955, in Seattle, Washington. Because he was the third Gates male to be named William Henry, the family nicknamed him Trey. *Trey* is a cardplayer's term for *three*. Everyone else called him Bill.



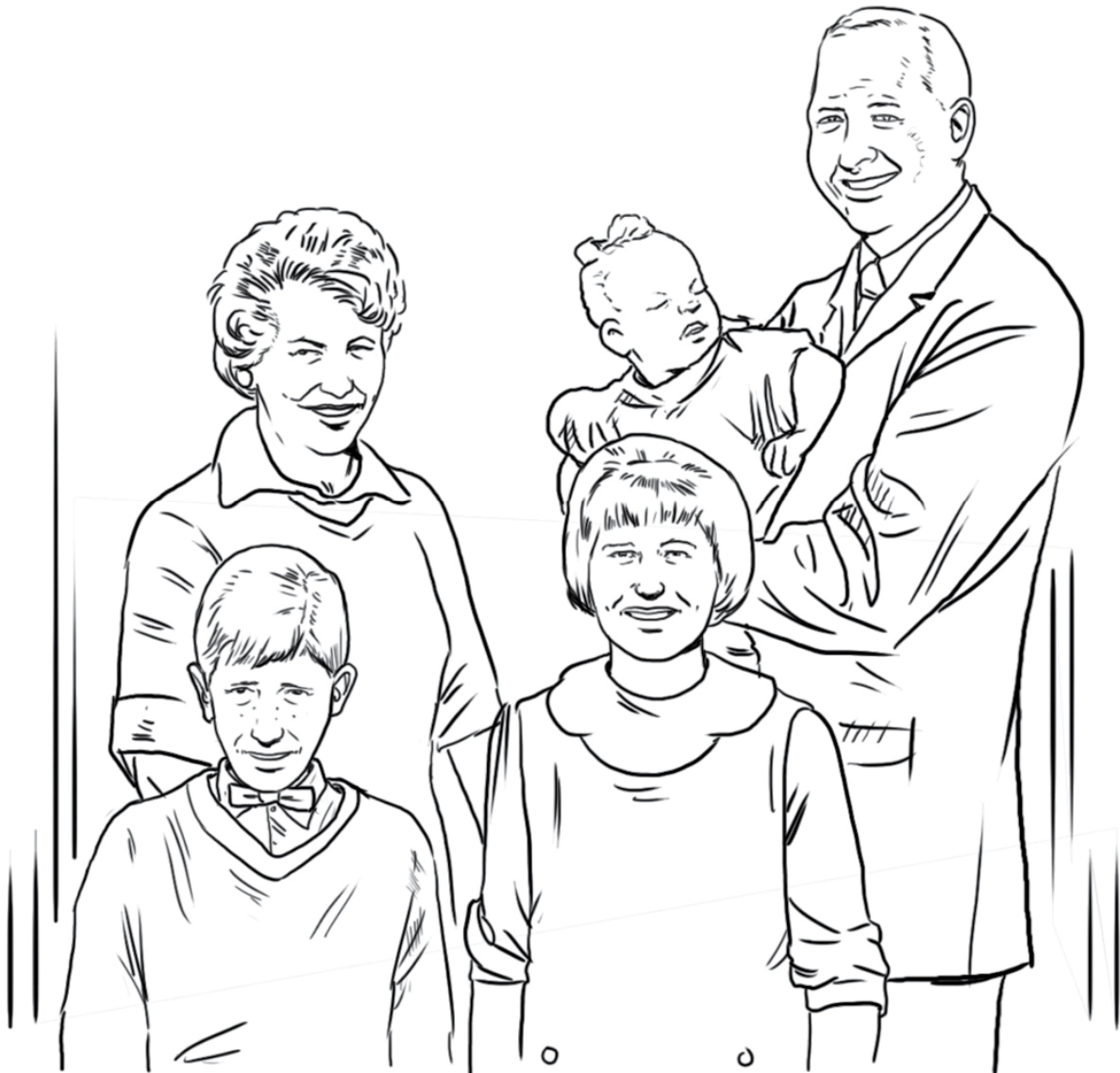
Bill was a very active child. He would rock for hours on his rocking horse. Back and forth. Back and forth. Years later in business meetings, Bill was known for rocking back and forth in his chair. He said it helped him think.

Bill's parents were educated and well-to-do.

William Gates Sr. was a successful lawyer. Mary Gates was a schoolteacher. After her children were born, she cared for her kids and did a lot of volunteer work. Smart and outgoing, Mary often took young Bill along with her on volunteer outings.

The Gateses were a warm and close family. Bill's sister Kristi was two years older and his sister Libby

was nine years younger.

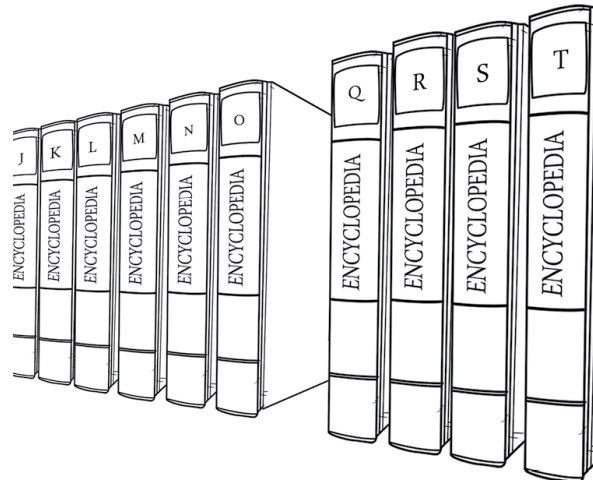


On school nights, no TV was allowed. Instead, the Gates family talked, played games, and read books.

Bill was a hungry reader. At age seven, he decided to read the entire encyclopedia! He read his way through all of *World Book*!

Anyone could see that young Bill was very smart. For Bill, thinking was an activity like drawing or reading. Once the whole family—except Bill—was in

the car, ready to go on a short trip. "Where's Bill?" asked Kristi. When his mother went back inside and found him, she said, "Bill, what are you *doing*?" Bill explained, "I'm *thinking*, Mother!"



Bill always looked for ways to challenge himself. He was left-handed. If he was bored in school, he took notes with his right hand.

When he was eleven, Bill entered a contest at his church. Any kid who could memorize the Sermon on the Mount got to have dinner at a restaurant at the top of the famous Space Needle in Seattle. The Sermon on the Mount is a long Bible passage. It would fill seventeen full pages in this book. Bill learned it all by heart and amazed the minister. Bill was the only one who didn't make a mistake. "I couldn't believe that an eleven-year-old boy had that kind of mind," the minister said. Bill told the minister matter-of-factly, "I can do anything I set my mind to."

Winning mattered a lot to Bill. He hated losing—at anything. Each summer, the Gates family stayed two weeks at a cabin on Hood Canal, near Puget Sound. The place was called *Cheerio*. Lots of other young families went to *Cheerio*, too. Weeks there were filled