Bill Joy

Co-Founder of Sun Microsystems

Biography

Dubbed the "Edison of the Internet" by Fortune Magazine, Bill Joy is one of luminaries of tech. Years before personal computers were being widely used, he created software that would enable the rise of the modern internet.

Joy began making his mark as a graduate student in Berkeley's electrical engineering and computer sciences department during the mid-1970s. Here, he played an integral role in developing the Berkeley Software Distribution (BSD) of UNIX — the first open source operating system to have built-in TCP/IP. This work helped lay the foundation for popular use of the internet and made him a legend in computing well before he received his degree in 1979.

In 1982, Joy was brought into Sun Microsystems to build software for a cheap but powerful system, called the SUN workstation, to take UNIX beyond academia and make it available to industry. Six months later, Joy was made a co-founder of the company. During his time at Sun, Joy was a key contributor to the SPARC microprocessor, which was the backbone of the company's billion-dollar server business for decades. He also inspired the development of the Java programming language and Solaris operating system.

Joy left Sun Microsystems in 2003 and, two years later, joined the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins, where he helped make decisions about green technology investments. He left that firm in 2014 and is the principal investigator and chief scientist at Water Street Capital.

Over the last three decades, Joy's work on BSD and at Sun Microsystems have earned him several honors. He was inducted as a Fellow of the Computer History Museum in 2011 and received ACM's Grace Murray Hopper Award in 1986. He is also a member of the National Academy of Engineering and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as well as a lifetime trustee of the Aspen Institute.