

Creating the Computer

In the mid-1970s, Ed Roberts – a native of Miami, Fla., an electrical engineering graduate of Oklahoma State University and a U.S. Air Force veteran – created the world's first commercially successful personal computer, the Altair 8800. He wrote a related article that was featured on the cover of the January 1975 issue of *Popular Electronics*.

This article excited a Harvard University undergraduate named Bill Gates and his good friend, Paul Allen, and the two contacted Roberts to write a BASIC interpreter for the machine. Roberts agreed to hire them, and Gates dropped out of Harvard. Later, Gates and Allen would leave Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS), which Roberts had founded, to begin a company called MicroSoft.

In 1977, MITS was bought by Pertec Computer Corporation for upwards of \$6 million.

What happened to Roberts? After the sale of his company, he bought a farm. Seven years later, at the age of 41, he entered medical school at Mercer University.

Today, Bill Gates is the head of the largest software company in the world. Ed Roberts is a country doctor in the small Georgia town of Cochran.

“The implication is that the PC is the most important thing I’ve ever done, and I don’t think that’s true,” Roberts says. “Every day, I deal with things that are equally, if not more, important here with my patients.”

How can we evaluate the significance of our lives? Something deep inside tells us it cannot be measured by wealth and fame. What is the value, for example, when ...

- A therapist helps a patient walk again?
- A nurse administers medication that relieves pain?
- A certified nursing assistant bathes a resident?
- A member of the dietary department provides a delicious meal?
- A laundry worker brings fresh linens?
- An activities director creates energy and smiles?

The apostle Paul approached the end of his life with a peaceful sense of successful completion. He wrote, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

--Beecher Hunter