Introduction

Three stories

On a warm June day in 2005, Steve Jobs went to his first college graduation—as the commencement speaker. The billionaire founder and leader of Apple Computer wasn’t just another stuffed-shirt businessman. Though only fifty years old, the college dropout was a technology rock star, a living legend to millions of people around the world.

In his early twenties, Jobs almost single-handedly introduced the world to the first computer that could sit on your desk and actually do something all by itself. He revolutionized music and the ears of a generation with a spiffy little music player called the iPod and a wide selection of songs at the iTunes store. He funded and nurtured a company called Pixar that made the most amazing computer-animated movies—*Toy Story, Cars,* and *Finding Nemo*—bringing to life imaginary characters like never before.

Though he was neither an engineer nor a computer geek, he helped create one gotta-have-it product after another by
always designing it with you and me, the actual users, in mind. Unknown to those listening to him that day, more insanely awesome technology was in the works, including the iPhone, which would put much of the power of a computer neatly into the palm of your hand. The father of four would be repeatedly compared with the inventor Thomas Edison and auto magnate Henry Ford, who both introduced affordable, life-changing conveniences that transformed the way Americans lived.

Yet for all his successes, Jobs also endured some very public failures. When he was thirty years old, he was summarily stripped of his duties at Apple for being too disruptive and difficult. He set out to build another computer company and missed the mark, blowing through millions of dollars of investors’ money. He could be volatile, screaming at associates, competitors, and reporters. He sometimes cried when things didn’t go his way and he regularly took credit for the ideas of others. He could be both charming and gratingly abrasive, sensitive and stunningly mean-spirited.

Some parts of his life sounded like a fairytale right out of the movies: There was a promise made when he was a baby, romances, remarkable rebounds, and riches almost too big to be believed. Other parts were so messy and ugly, so very human, that they would never be considered family entertainment. He was both loved and hated, intensely admired and

Wearing blue jeans and sandals under his graduation-day robe, Jobs stepped up to the microphone to speak in the same way he did just about everything: with intensity and passion. In a short speech to the twenty-three thousand students, parents, and friends gathered, he very publicly shared very personal insights into his own life.

“Today I want to tell you three stories from my life.”

No more. Just three stories that defined an amazing life and provided a guide designed for people at the beginning of their adult lives. To understand who Steve Jobs was and what he became, it helps to start there, with the first of those three stories.
Steve Jobs, Senior yearbook photo, 1972.

Steve Wozniak, Senior yearbook photo 1968.
Valentine accurately concluded that they didn’t know about marketing or how to win big sales. And, he said, “They weren’t thinking anywhere near big enough.” To him, that was a bad sign. “Big thinkers often do big things. Small thinkers never do big things,” he liked to say. He turned them down, but gave Jobs the name of another potential investor, A. C. “Mike” Markkula.

Markkula, who was only in his early thirties, was an early employee of Intel and had become a millionaire when the chip company first sold stock to the public. He was now mostly retired, enjoying his family and living off his investments.

Markkula arrived at the Jobs garage in a gold Chevrolet Corvette sports car. First, he noticed that both Steves needed a haircut. Then, he saw the computer and was blown away. “It was what I had wanted since I left high school,” he said. At
Steve Jobs (left) and Steve Wozniak collaborating on the Apple II.
The dream team behind the Macintosh in 1984 (Jobs far right).
The image of Bill Gates overwhelms the stage as Steve Jobs announces an agreement for Microsoft to invest in Apple.
Apple's "Think Different" campaign (which ran both in print and on television) didn't try to sell a specific product. Instead it celebrated creativity by linking the Apple brand name to extraordinary people.
The executive team behind the iPhone design. From left: Philip Schiller, iPod Boss Tony Fadell, Design Chief Jonathan Ive, Apple CEO Steve Jobs, Scott Forstall, and Eddy Cue.
Though Steve Jobs had battled cancer for years, somehow his death felt unexpected.

Within hours after the news came out, there was an outpouring of grief from around the world that was unprecedented for a business executive. In front of Apple’s headquarters at One Infinite Loop in Cupertino, in front of the Jobses’ home in Palo Alto, in front of Apple stores from San Francisco to New York to China, people came to pay their respects. They left flowers and candles and hundreds of personal thank-you notes stuck onto the store windows. They left apples, whole and bitten. They brought their iPhones and their iPads, with messages of sadness and appreciation.

It was as if a world-famous movie star or a rock star had died. U2’s Bono called Jobs “the hardware software Elvis.” His face was on the cover of magazines from People to The
Economist, and many publications rushed out special issues commemorating his life, which flew off the shelves.

In her eulogy, which was reprinted in the New York Times, Mona Simpson shared her brother’s loyalty, his love of beauty, his incredible tenacity, and his hard work. Before he lost consciousness for the last time, she wrote, “He’d looked at his sister Patty, then for a long time at his children, then at his life’s partner, Laurene, and then over their shoulders past them.

“Steve’s final words were:
‘OH WOW. OH WOW. OH WOW.’”

Still in his prime years as a businessman, he had left much unfinished. He had been deeply involved in plans for Apple’s new headquarters, going through design after design, and insisting that it include the apricot orchards that dotted the valley when he was a boy. He had hoped Apple would figure out a better way to provide television to the masses. And realizing that many kids are no longer assigned lockers, he hoped to find a way to make textbooks more available electronically, perhaps by selling iPads with textbooks already loaded.

He left a company in mid-roar. The Apple he ran was fifteen times bigger than the one he took over in 1997. In the fiscal year that ended just before he died, Apple recorded sales of $108 billion, reflecting even faster growth than the year before. Nearly 24 cents of every $1 of sales was pure profit. Though his computers and smart phones were among the most expensive on the market, Apple had sold more than
72 million phones, more than 42 million iPods, 32 million iPads, and almost 17 million computers in one year.

He had become phenomenally wealthy, worth an estimated $7 billion, according to *Forbes* magazine, with the largest piece from his Disney stock, followed by his Apple holdings.

Only a few business icons in history changed a single industry, but Jobs had remade several. He wasn’t the creator of the personal computer, but he was the voice and face of the revolution. He didn’t make the wonderful, computer-animated Pixar movies, but he made them happen. He put digital music and the Internet in our pockets in an elegant way, and he made our lives easier by insisting that every gadget Apple made—and thus, the gadgets that many others made in response—be simple and fun to use.

At a memorial service for Apple employees, Tim Cook, Apple’s new CEO, said that one of the lessons Jobs taught him was that “simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to get your thinking clear enough to make it simple. But it’s worth it in the end, because once you get there, you can move mountains.”

It would be easy to get hung up on Steve Jobs’s quirkiness and to focus on his ugly side—his temper tantrums, his impatience, how cold and uncaring he could be, how ridiculously high his expectations were, and how demanding he was of those around him. Even Simpson noted in her eulogy...
that he went through sixty-seven nurses before finding three he trusted.

But ultimately, he was like his products. His Macintosh had too little memory and no cursors keys, his iMac was missing a floppy drive, his iPod didn’t have on-off switch. Each was brilliant—and also flawed. But you could overlook the very real imperfections because the rest of the package was so amazing. Many executives and engineers stayed at Apple for years, enduring Jobs’s endless demands because they did great work under him, maybe better work than they would have done otherwise.
As much as he pushed them, Jobs didn’t want the people he worked with to try to guess what he wanted or to try to be him. “Among the last advice he had for me and all of you,” Cook said, “was to never ask what he would do. ‘Just do what’s right,’ he said.”

More than gadgets, Steve Jobs left the lessons that he spelled out so powerfully in his Stanford speech and in the way he lived:

He trusted that the dots would connect. He believed the reward was in the journey.

He followed his heart. He didn’t settle for okay.

He did what he loved. And if he didn’t love what he did, if he didn’t believe it was great work, he redid it again and again.

He tried to live each day as though it really mattered, even before he had cancer.

Oh, and there was one other thing. In a 1998 interview and again at the Stanford graduation, he recalled *The Whole Earth Catalog*, an unusual publication that was popular when he was in high school. In the final issue, he remembered, the back cover had a photo of a remote country road.

The caption read: “Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.”

And now, he said, “I wish that for you.”
Stay Hungry Stay Foolish
February 24, 1955
Jobs is born and soon adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs, who name him Steven Paul.

1967
The family moves to Los Altos, California, so that Jobs can attend a better school.

1968
Jobs sees the first personal computer, the HP 9100A, which was actually a large desktop calculator.

Approx. 1970
Jobs is introduced to Steve “Woz” Wozniak, future Apple cofounder.

September 1971
Woz calls Jobs to tell him about blue boxes, which can make free long-distance phone calls. Woz makes one, and the two end up selling the boxes.

December 1972
Jobs drops out of Reed College after only one semester.

September 1972
Jobs enrolls in Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

February 1974
Jobs moves back home and gets a job at Atari.

March 1975
Homebrew Computer Club is started.

December 1979
Jobs and other Apple staff visit Xerox PARC and discover new computer technologies, including the GUI and the mouse.

May 17, 1978
Jobs first child, Lisa Brennan-Jobs, is born.

April 15–17, 1977
Jobs debuts the Apple II at the West Coast Computer Faire in San Francisco.

January 1977
Apple Computer moves into its first real offices on Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino, California.

April 1, 1976
Apple Computer is officially founded by Jobs, Wozniak, and Ron Wayne (who dropped out shortly afterward).

Spring 1976
Jobs receives Apple’s first order for fifty computers (which became the Apple I) and sets up shop in his parents’ home.

January 3, 1977
Mike Markkula, an investor, supplies $250,000 initial financial backing in exchange for a one-third interest and Wozniak’s quitting his job at HP to work at Apple full-time.

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