

The American entrepreneur, philanthropist and the Chairman of Microsoft, was born on 28th October, 1955 into a wealthy Seattle family. His father was a prominent attorney and mother, a bank board member. A story goes that, at his birth, his father set-up a million-dollar fund for him. But, Gates denied it. But one thing that is for sure, is that he had the best of education, including 3 years at Harvard.

As a student, Gates excelled in elementary school, particularly in Mathematics and Sciences. At 13, he was enrolled in the Lakeside School, Seattle's most exclusive preparatory school. When he was in the eighth grade, the school mothers used proceeds' from Lakeside's rummage sale to buy an ASR-33 teletype terminal and a block of computer time in a General Electric Computer. Gates took an interest in programming the GE system in BASIC and was excused from Maths classes to pursue his interest. After the Mothers' Club donation was exhausted, he and other students sought time on other systems, including DEC PDP minicomputer. One of these systems was a PDP-10 belonging to Computer Centre Corporation, which banned the Lakeside students for the summer after it caught them exploiting bugs in the operating system to obtain free computer time.

At the end of the ban, the Lakeside students offered to find bugs in CCC's software in Exchange for free computer time. Gates went to CCC's offices and studied source code for various programmes that ran on the system, not only in BASIC but FORTRAN, LISP and machine language as well. The arrangement with CCC continued until 1970, then it went out of business. The following year, Information Sciences Inc. hired the Lakeside students to write a payroll program in COBOL, providing them not only computer time but royalties as well. At the age of 14, Gates was dexterous enough to form a venture with Allen, called Traf-O-Data, to make traffic counters based on Intel 8.008 processor. That first year, he made dollar 20,000, however, when his age was found out, business slowed down.

Since beginning, Bill Gates was on the lookout for opportunities. So, after reading the January 1975 issue of Popular Electronics that demonstrated the Altair 8,800, Gates contacted MITS (Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems), the creators of the new microcomputer. He informed them that he and others were working on a BASIC interpreter for the platform. MITS President, Ed Roberts, agreed to meet them for a demo and when Gates demonstrated his work, it was a success.

Paul Allen, Gates' intimate friend was hired into MITS, and Gates took a leave of absence from Harvard to work with Allen at MITS, dubbing their partnership

'Micro-Soft' in November, 1975. Within a year, the hyphen was dropped and on 26th November, 1976, the trade name "Microsoft" was registered. Microsoft became 1 independent of MITS in late 1976, and it continued to develop programming language software for various systems.