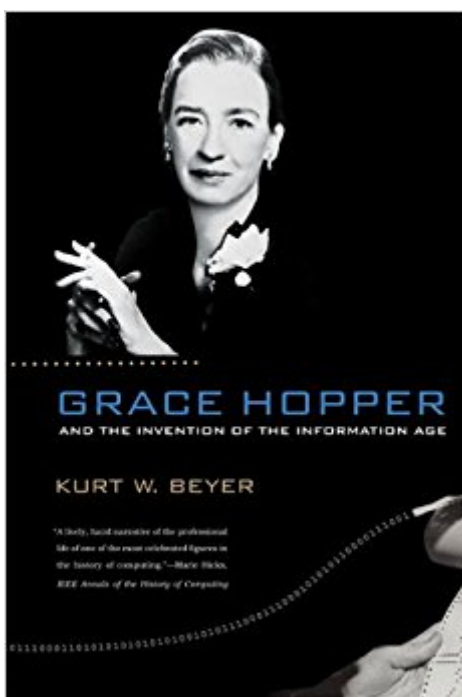The book was found

Grace Hopper And The Invention Of The Information Age (Lemelson Center Studies In Invention And Innovation Series)

Synopsis

A Hollywood biopic about the life of computer pioneer Grace Murray Hopper (1906--1992) would go like this: a young professor abandons the ivy-covered walls of academia to serve her country in the Navy after Pearl Harbor and finds herself on the front lines of the computer revolution. She works hard to succeed in the all-male computer industry, is almost brought down by personal problems but survives them, and ends her career as a celebrated elder stateswoman of computing, a heroine to thousands, hailed as the inventor of computer programming. Throughout Hopper's later years, the popular media told this simplified version of her life story. In Grace Hopper and the Invention of the Information Age, Kurt Beyer reveals a more authentic Hopper, a vibrant and complex woman whose career paralleled the meteoric trajectory of the postwar computer industry. Both rebellious and collaborative, Hopper was influential in male-dominated military and business organizations at a time when women were encouraged to devote themselves to housework and childbearing. Hopper's greatest technical achievement was to create the tools that would allow humans to communicate with computers in terms other than ones and zeroes. This advance influenced all future programming and software design and laid the foundation for the development of user-friendly personal computers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I saw Grace Hopper speak when I was a young software programmer at Bell Labs. While she spoke

of great technology and the power of computing, she also re-enforced the creative power of youthful thinking, public speaking, and collaborative efforts. Grace Hopper and the Invention of the Information Age brings all of those themes together in a compelling way, placing Grace Hopper where she belongs: at the creative genesis of the technology upon which our world depends. (Lucy Sanders, CEO and Co-founder, National Center for Women and Information Technology)It is a pleasure to finally read a biography of Grace Hopper that does not simply list the clichéd myths about 'Amazing Grace' but instead tells the story of her wonderful life and contributions to the development of programming languages. Beyer reveals interesting facts and aspects of her life that I have never seen published. It portrays Grace as a human being and subject to the whims of both personal and social problems of her era. Along the way it provides insight into the changing social status of technically oriented women and details the personal struggles that this caused Grace and her female colleagues. (Michael R. Williams, Professor Emeritus, Department of Computer Science, University of Calgary)Beyer's meticulously researched biography shows how Hopper was one of the first to realise that software was the key to unlocking the power of the computer. (The Guardian)Bravo to Beyer for unearthing the fascinating, many-faceted history...of a phenomenal technology we take for granted and for portraying a woman of astonishing powers. (Booklist)

Kurt W. Beyer is a former professor at the United States Naval Academy and lectures regularly on the process of technological innovation.

I recently attended technical computer training and there were only 2 women present amongst perhaps 35 men. It gave me pause and, for some reason, made me think of "Amazing Grace" Hopper. What did she go through? What was her career like? Superficially, I knew who Amazing Grace was. She was a frequent conference speaker when I first started in computing. She was a legend then for being the person who coined the term "bug" after discovering a moth in the original Mark II computer in the 40s.But reading this book put the meat on the bones of achievements that boggle my mind:- invented the subroutine- invented the compiler- one of only 400 Americans awarded a doctorate in mathematics between 1930-1934- one of the first women to receive a mathematics degree from Yale- joined the first computer start-up ever - EVER!- invented COBOL which nearly 80% of all code was written in by 2000 (which I both studied and taught)- reached the rank of Rear Admiral in the USNavy and retired at 86 as the oldest active officer in the navy- Was a founder of the Association for Computing Machinery (which I have been a member of for >30 years)Little did I truly, truly understand the impact of Grace Hopper until I read this book. What a life

and what a contribution.

Rear Admiral Grace Hopper was many things: brilliant, accomplished, a patriot, a leader and an innovator. She was a giant in the field of computing and information technology (IT) and was a champion in establishing many of the technical innovations (such as the compiler, which translates coding written by programmers into machine language which is executed by computers independent of platform), professional forums, and common languages used in the IT field today. Additionally, she played a critical role in helping industry see the value in investing in mainframe computer development during their infancy. This book does a great job in telling her story and giving context to her achievements (especially as a female officer in the Navy during the 1940's). Without a doubt, she was a pioneer not only for her technical and professional accomplishments, but also in increasing opportunities for women in all branches of the US military by example. This book is inspiring and I recommend it for anyone, not just for those interesting in the computer field.

We talk today as if innovation is a new thing but if you want to see true innovation at work, this is the book for you! RADM Grace Hopper not only developed compilers (to make coding available for the rest of us) but she made programming languages, subroutines and how-to manuals so that the new field of computers took root not only in the military but in the business world as well. Her other gifts included mentoring, teaching, political savvy-ness and above all relating the complex world of math, computers and coding to the masses even rigid Naval Brass. I was fortunate as a young computer science student to have attended two Grace Hopper speeches in the early 1980s and I still have my "Grace Hopper" nanoseconds! Her life, leadership, innovative mind and love for her country and the Navy is truly a story from which everyone could benefit.

I am just so glad to find this. She was ome of my heroes when I was in high school. The story of her ordering the computers before telling her boss was a story everyone in IT can identify with. We still have a problem qith some CEOs over 50. They just don't want to learn anything new.

Difficult to write a review of this book because the eight existing reviews have already expressed a lot of my thoughts.I was trained on UNIVAC computers in 1962. Eventually, spent 21 years of my life programming computers. Got a chance to chat with Grace Hopper a couple of times in her Pentagon office back in 1970.This book does a masterful job of telling how it all came about especially from the perspective of someone who's done a lot of programming.When I got involved

with UNIVAC computers in 1962, the invention of the basics of the digital computer and high order programming languages were essentially complete. I found it fascinating to read about the early machines and the struggle by the programmers to communicate with them and to get the results they needed. The technical descriptions of the machines involved don't tell me as much about what's really going on as the descriptions of the early efforts to program them.A great read. A much needed combination of biography and history.

Bravo to Beyer for telling the story of a human being who chose to share her many talents with mankind, in spite of her weaknesses. I met inventors and scientists and this book confirms my experience: they are not superheros. Grace Hopper fascinates me because of her will. She was gifted with great talents, but I admire her for her determination to overcome tough environments and harsh personal issues.

Excellent book for someone who has been a programmer. It shows the beginning of programming languages, compilers, flow charts all though the eyes of the first woman in computers, Grace Hopper.The book was a little slow in the beginning and then picks up speed.It also helps understand how different management styles played a role in early computer development.

What a fascinating woman. What a fascinating era. Kurt Beyer brings her story to life and explains much about the early days of computers and programming that most of us don't know and simply take for granted. Beyer blends history, technological information and human interest into this worthwhile read. Thank you.

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