Go To The Story Of The Math Majors, Bridge Players, Engineers, Chess Wizards, Scientists And Iconoclasts Who Were The Hero Programmers Of The Software Revolution

Steve Lohr

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In the 1950s, just before John Backus's team developed the Fortran language that revolutionized the first generation of programming, it took dozens of full-time programmers and operators to run and debug each of the era's room-sized computers. Today, languages like HTML are simple enough that anyone who knows it can set up a personal Web page, using a laptop that has many times the power of those early giant computers.In Go To, Steve Lohr chronicles the history of software from the early days of complex mathematical codes mastered by a few thousand to today's era of user-friendly software and over six million professional programmers worldwide. Lohr maps out the unique seductions of programming, and gives us an intimate portrait of the peculiar kind of genius that is drawn to this unique blend of art, science, and engineering. We meet the movers and shakers of every era from the 1950s to the open-source movement of today-iconoclasts such as Ken Thompson and Dennis Ritchie, the Bell Labs engineers whose Unix operating system and C programming language loosened the grip of IBM; Charles Simonyi, the father of Word, the most popular software application; and James Gosling, the creative force behind Java, the leading programming language for the Internet.With original reporting and deft storytelling, Steve Lohr shows us how software transformed the world, and what it holds in store for our future. "They took anyone who seemed to have an aptitude for problem-solving skills-bridge players, chess players, even women."-Lois Haibt, a member of IBM's original Fortran team"It's like building something where you don't have to order the cement.… You can create a world of your own, your own environment, and never leave the room."-Ken Thompson, creator of the Unix operating system"BASIC was an open city, Shanghai a hundred years ago. There were no laws."-Alan Cooper, the "father" of Visual Basic"There is an odd and obsessive side to it. The people who are best at it are the kind of people who are intellectually drawn to something like it's magnetic, sucked into it, and they don't know why."-James Gosling, creator of the Java programming language"Not being able to program is going to be like not being able to drive-lacking a fundamental skill in our society."-Brian Behlendorf, a leading figure in the open-source software movement

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