BRIER DUDLEY'S BLOG

Brier Dudley offers a critical look at technology and business issues affecting the Northwest.

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Seminal UW computer scientist honored

Posted by Brier Dudley

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One of the most illustrious graduates of the University of Washington's computer science program will be honored Friday in Pacific Grove, Calif.

That's where Gary Kildall and fellow UW alum John Torode in 1974 figured out a system for booting a computer from a floppy disk drive, a cornerstone in the development of the personal-computer operating system.

After working at Intel, Kildall formed a company called Digital Research that led the market in the 1970s with its CP/M operating system — until Microsoft licensed its MS-DOS operating system to IBM.

Now Kildall, who died in 1994, is being recognized through the IEEE Milestones in Engineering and Computing program. On Friday the engineering association is placing a milestone plaque on the sidewalk at 801 Lighthouse Ave. in Pacific Grove, the site of Kildall's Digital Research office.

The plaque will read, in part:

> *Dr. Gary A. Kildall demonstrated the first working prototype of CP/M (Control Program for Microcomputers) in Pacific Grove in 1974. Together with his invention of the BIOS (Basic Input Output System), Kildall's operating system allowed a microprocessor-based computer to communicate with a disk drive storage unit and provided an important foundation for the personal computer revolution.*

At UW, Kildall received a bachelor's in mathematics in 1967, a master's in computer science in 1968 and a PhD in computer science in 1972.

So far there's no plaque recognizing Kildall at the UW, though it does have a Kildall Endowed Scholarship, according to Ed Lazowska, the Bill and Melinda Gates Chair in Computer Science and Engineering.