

UNCLASSIFIED

Dr. Mark Dean

<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/PIX/dean.mark.gif>

"America's High Tech "Invisible Man"

By Tyrone D. Taborn

You may not have heard of Dr. Mark Dean. And you aren't alone. But almost everything in your life has been affected by his work.

See, Dr. Mark Dean is a Ph.D. from Stanford University. He is in the National Hall of Inventors. He has more than 30 patents pending. He is a vice president with IBM. Oh, yeah. And he is also the architect of the modern-day personal computer. Dr. Dean holds three of the original nine patents on the computer that all PCs are based upon. And, Dr. Mark Dean is an African American.

So how is it that we can celebrate the 20th anniversary of the IBM personal computer without reading or hearing a single word about him? Given all of the pressure mass media are under about negative portrayals of African Americans on television and in print, you would think it would be a slam dunk to highlight someone like Dr. Dean.

Somehow, though, we have managed to miss the shot. History is cruel when it comes to telling the stories of African Americans. Dr. Dean isn't the first Black inventor to be overlooked. Consider John Stanard, inventor of the refrigerator, George Sampson, creator of the clothes dryer, Alexander Miles and his elevator, Lewis Latimer and the electric lamp.

All of these inventors share two things:

One, they changed the landscape of our society; and, two, society relegated them to the footnotes of history. Hopefully, Dr. Mark Dean won't go away as quietly as they did. He certainly shouldn't.

Dr. Dean helped start a Digital Revolution that created people like Microsoft's Bill Gates and Dell Computer's Michael Dell. Millions of jobs in information technology can be traced back directly to Dr. Dean.

More important, stories like Dr. Mark Dean's should serve as inspiration for African-American children. Already victims of the "Digital Divide" and failing school systems, young, Black kids might embrace technology with more enthusiasm if they knew someone like Dr. Dean already was leading the way.

Although technically Dr. Dean can't be credited with creating the computer -- that is left to Alan Turing, a pioneering 20th-century English mathematician, widely considered to be the father of modern computer science -- Dr. Dean rightly deserves to take a bow for the machine we use today. The computer really wasn't practical for home or small business use until he came along, leading a team that developed the interior architecture (ISA systems bus) that enables multiple devices, such as modems and printers, to be connected to personal computers.

In other words, because of Dr. Dean, the PC became a part of our daily lives. For most of us, changing the face of society would have been enough. But not for Dr. Dean. Still in his early forties, he has a lot of inventing left in him.

He recently made history again by leading the design team responsible for creating the first 1-gigahertz processor chip. It's just another huge step in making computers faster and smaller. As the world congratulates itself for the new Digital Age brought on by the personal computer, we need to guarantee that the African-American story is part of the hoopla surrounding the most stunning technological advance the world has ever seen. We cannot afford to let Dr. Mark Dean become a footnote in history. He is well worth his own history book.