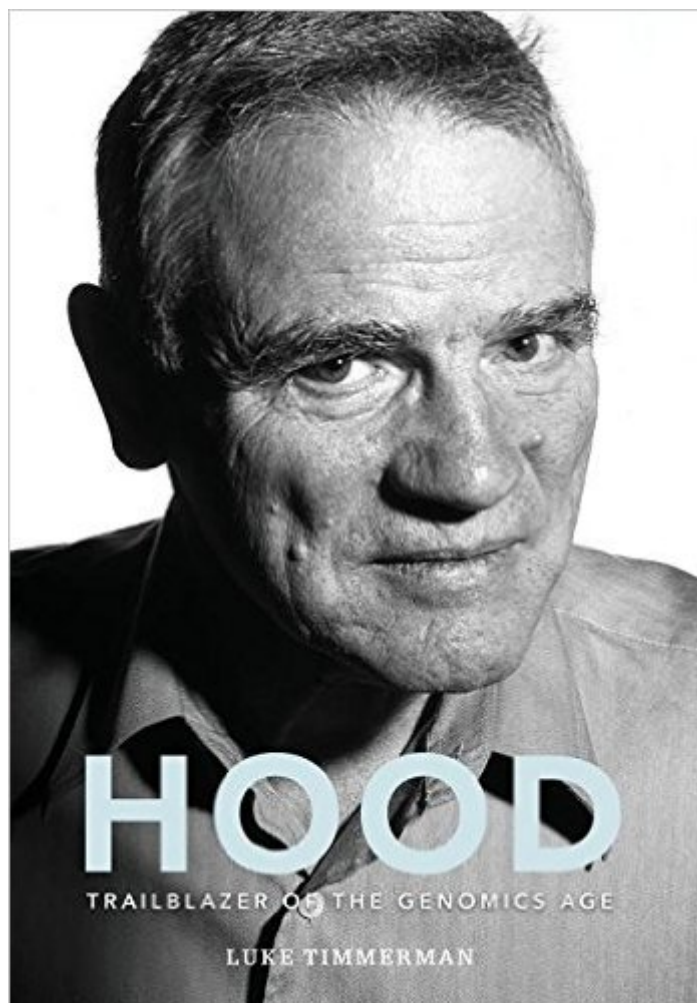


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Hood: Trailblazer Of The Genomics Age



Synopsis

Lee Hood did that rarest of things. He enabled scientists to see things they couldn't see before and do things they hadn't dreamed of doing. Scientists can now sequence complete human genomes in a day, setting in motion a revolution that is personalizing medicine. Hood, a son of the American West, was an unlikely candidate to transform biology. But with ferocious drive, he led a team at Caltech that developed the automated DNA sequencer, the tool that paved the way for the Human Genome Project. He captivated scientists with his almost religious fervor for the new biology enabled by the machines. Hood's brilliance, rebellion, enthusiasm, and ego earned him detractors as well as admirers. His management style, once described as "creative anarchy," alienated many. Some of his collaborators seethed, claiming he took too much credit. Fellow Caltech biologists charged that his empire building was out of control and ousted him as their chairman. A fraud in his lab made him consider, for a moment, quitting science. Wooed by money from Bill Gates, Hood started over at the University of Washington, creating the world's first Department of Molecular Biotechnology. Seven years later, his impatience for rules drove him to depart. He left at age sixty-one to start his own Institute for Systems Biology. Would he finally achieve the ultimate application of the genome project--personalized medicine? In "Hood: Trailblazer of the Genomics Age," journalist Luke Timmerman zeroes in on a charismatic, controversial personality. Never-before-reported details are drawn from the scientist's confidential files, public records, and more than 150 interviews with Hood and his family, friends, collaborators, and detractors. The result is not just a revealing portrait of one of the most influential biologists of our time, but a deeply human look at science itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When the author, who for full disclosure I've known for years and consider a friend, told me he was writing a biography I was skeptical it would teach anyone much about the business of biotechnology -- even with such a compelling subject as Dr. Leroy Hood. I was wrong. The first two-thirds of the book are spectacular. As a non-scientist who has worked in the biotech industry for nearly two decades now, the story of all the technologies our industry takes for granted -- technologies without which modern biotechnology research and development would be impossible -- was gripping and informative, providing great insights. Mr. Timmerman has an unusually great talent for making hard science accessible to the non-scientist, making all of the key portions of the book accessible to anyone. The last third of the book, and in some ways a consistent underlying theme of Dr. Hood's story, is perhaps less easy to appreciate for people who have not been involved in this business. Understanding biology is orders of magnitude more difficult than anyone expects. Failure is the rule, not the exception. Getting off track, and spending astonishing amounts of time and money on the wrong track, is something everyone in our industry does. Those considered 'geniuses' in our industry simply do it slightly less often -- or at least less publicly -- than their peers. And too often, our industry is just too early and we get caught in the quintessential vicious cycle of being on the bleeding edge of science -- we don't have the tools to prove our theories, society hasn't caught up to be where they need to be to embrace our theories, and (as a consequence) the money isn't there for the resources to prove us right. In the author's hands, Dr.

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