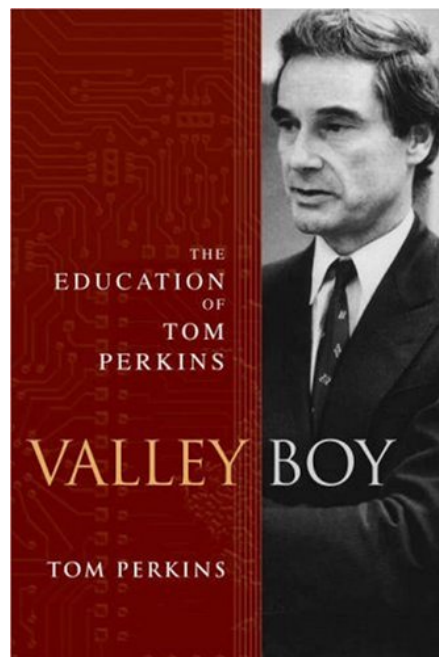




Valley Boy: The Education of Tom Perkins

Tom Perkins

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A revealing memoir from Tom Perkins—renowned venture capitalist, Silicon Valley and biotechnology pioneer, and one of America’s most successful businessmen

Known for his idiosyncratic ideas and golden touch, Tom Perkins has always been one of the business world’s most intriguing figures. But his legacy took an unexpected new turn when he resigned from Hewlett-Packard’s board in 2006, protesting the “questionable ethics and dubious legality” of their chairman’s now infamous leak investigation. In this insightful memoir, Perkins recalls these and other fascinating episodes of his life, both personal and professional, including his involvement in the creation of American industries no one could have dreamed of a century ago.

In 1957 Perkins started working for Hewlett-Packard, and his career with the company spanned, becoming the administrative head of the research laboratories and the first general manager of its skyrocketing computer businesses. He was a pioneer in laser technology, starting the company that he later merged into Spectra-Physics. As chairman of Genentech for fourteen years, founder of the Silicon Valley venture-capitalist firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, and director of Applied Materials at Compaq, Corning Glass, and Philips Electronics, Perkins never shies away from the cutting edge.

He also discusses his marriage to Danielle Steel, his notorious vintage car collection, his yacht (the largest privately owned sailboat), his race across the ocean, his being tried for manslaughter in a backwater French town, and the toughest assignment he’s ever had: as a trustee emeritus at the San Francisco ballet.

Valley Boy: The Education of Tom Perkins Details

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From Reader Review Valley Boy: The Education of Tom Perkins for online ebook

Vinay says

An insightful book on the life of Tom Perkins, reflective of what I can only assume was the man's style. The book is not entirely about being a VC, director of major hi-tech companies or the lifestyle of zillionaires. It has chapters on yachts, boats, novel writing, meaningful friendships among others. All in all his education appears wholesome and something I would want to experience in my own life. His writings on his failures and on his appetite for risk were the parts I found most interesting.

E says

omg the book starts out with the Compaq /HP merger and how he pushed for it (now known as one of the worst mergers of all time.) I passed that to then read about his big sailing race trying to get over the death of his wife from cancer. putting this down now. boring. just like silicon valley and the VC folks!

Ellie E says

I'm reading Valley Boy, a memoir by Tom Perkins. It's a very advanced read that I recommend to all people looking for a great memoir. This man mixes in lots of educational info about the stock market, but also mixes it in with funny stories about his childhood. All the "characters" each have a distinct voice. These people stay with the book the whole time making it easy to remember names and what's going on. I have to say, it is pretty hard to read but I know it will be worth it in the end.

Herve says

Tom Perkins is one of the icons of Silicon Valley. I have not read yet his new autobiography but Andre Mercanzini, a colleague at EPFL, just mentioned to me an interesting podcast from VentureVoice. Here is Perkins' views about why Silicon Valley is unique:

The difference is in psychology: everybody in Silicon Valley knows somebody that is doing very well in high-tech small companies, start-ups; so they say to themselves "I am smarter than Joe. If he could make millions, I can make a billion". So they do and they think they will succeed and by thinking they can succeed, they have a good shot at succeeding. That psychology does not exist so much elsewhere.

Dot says

If you LOVE silicon valley, you will like this book. I love the lure of technology and the many amazing minds that are the energy of the most amazing place on earth. Great stuff about the early days of Hewlett Packard. Some of the chapters are more personal and lend more toward an autobiography, less about the

evolution of the valley. I enjoyed it.

Richard MacManus says

I enjoyed reading this book from Kleiner Perkins co-founder Tom Perkins. It is a varied book, going from his love of yachting, the love of his life Gerd (his first wife), his marriage to romance novelist Danielle Steele, and some fascinating looks into his business life - e.g. he was an early employee at HP. Some quirky stories too, like the guy who invented a revolutionary chip that held megabytes of data, but who died the day after Perkins closed an investment deal and his 'secret sauce' was never discovered!

Perkins is evidently a bit of a character, as his descriptions of writing his novel ('Sex and the single zillionaire') and attending a romance novelists convention attest to.

To be honest I skipped most of the last chapter about yachting (too much inside baseball for me, and I'm a kiwi!). But enjoyable book overall.

Allen Price says

This was a great swath of early Venture Capital in Silicon Valley told by one of the first. The education, experience, success, and ego of Tom Perkins makes a terrific subject. Entertaining, informative, chatty, and behind the scenes. His short marriage to Danielle Steele was a screamer yet revealing. All of us should be so smart and lucky as Tom Perkins. This man has accomplished so much regardless whether you love him or hate him. I loved it.

Leonidas Kaplan says

One of the original founders of the Silicon Valley venture capitalists phenomenon, pioneer and entrepreneur in biotechnology, and one of America's most well known and successful businessmen. Following no particular chronology, but rather written as the author pleased, Valley Boy covers many aspects to Tom Perkins personality, success stories, and personal life, with a few chapters here and there dedicated to him going from a modest upbringing to a multi-billion dollar empire.

Rating 3/5 - Although a couple chapters were interesting (in particular about venture capital, and his entrepreneurship into biotechnology and many of the technologies we now know: ie. insulin production), once I covered those chapters, the rest was about his boat, and life with Danielle Steel (novel writer), which was uninteresting. Not much practical value, other than reading how things were done 40-50 years ago. A moderate inside history of the founders of HP was intriguing.

Gerry says

This book became a good escape from my normal Military History reading and it was a pleasure to read of a successful (though by no means perfect) entrepreneur. Mr. Perkins was both honest and sincere in his work and for those parts of his life he disclosed. I was especially touched by his account of his wife's death and

points at her funeral. I hope he will commit to writing more about business and the expectation that success is often first met with failure.

Liz says

So far, my take is that Tom Perkins is a better scientist than writer, but he has led a very interesting life. The book is at its best when he talks about board-room machinations, or scientific discovery.

I don't really care that he is so into cars or sailing, but good for him for finding something interesting to do with all that time and money.

Bart says

A fascinating story of a brilliant man who followed his gut and was right most of the time. He is cocky and brash but would not have succeeded as he has without that drive to be the best and always looking for the next great challenge.

Sarah says

Excellent on so many levels. Read if you're curious about how to make it in Silicon Valley, want a glimpse of social mores in 1950s San Francisco, or need advice on how to behave in a French courtroom. This was a quick, engrossing read.

Tech Historian says

Insightful, but not in the way he intended

The traits of successful entrepreneurs are well known: passion, brilliance, tenacity, and resilience. Tom Perkins clearly embodies all of these. Over the years investors in Silicon Valley have also noticed that a disproportionate number of entrepreneurs with these same skills come from dysfunctional families. As survivors of these environments, they have unique abilities to recognize patterns in noise, bring order out of chaos, rebound from failure and have an extraordinary drive to succeed (as they are driven with something to prove.)

Perkins tells us that he grew up in such a household; "Dad was fearful of risk and endured years of unhappy employment. " About his mother, "I'll always picture her standing in our little kitchen with a butcher knife pressed against her wrist."

The demons that drive these individuals make them great entrepreneurs and yet it also makes them less than perfect human beings.

Capitalism, IRR's (internal rate of return) and Initial Public Offerings are all Silicon Valley metrics of how much money you can make - and by these standards Tom Perkins was as good as it gets.

These people are perfect to invest in and then with, but are not the best people to find for emotional maturity and insight. The good news is that when most of these entrepreneurs get to their 40's or 50's they begin to have some insight about what drove them and they become reflective about the trail of broken glass (typically family, personal and business relationships) they've left to get where they are.

About this time, with nothing more to prove professionally most of these individuals tend to repair the unhealthy part of their personalities and try to become complete people. As they age the aggressive entrepreneur you knew in their 20's and 30's matures as forgiveness, wisdom and grace emerge.

Read this book to see that it doesn't always happen that way.

Sheila says

Tom Perkins is a obviously a very accomplished man with supersized intelligence and ego. I expected the book to be a chronological review of his life in technology and Silicon Valley venture capital business. I was pleasantly surprised to find the book much more entertaining, personal and humorous than I expected.

The style of the book takes a bit getting used to, which is snapshot by snapshot, of the interesting "educational" things he did in life. The stories did not follow a timeline format, rather went from the scandalous boardroom battles at HP, to his manslaughter conviction in France from a boating accident, back to his entrepreneur days at HP, to starting the VC and hitting multiple home runs with computing and biotech. The stories reflected a wide range of intense interests and pursuits he had in life which were absolutely fascinating. My favorite chapter was the one about how he turned around the San Francisco Ballet, which gave great insight to how his mind worked as a manager to any business and organizational problem no matter how crazy they were.

The education I gained from reading his experience in technology, VC, sailing, writing and managing SF Ballet, is to understand how the ideas of these experiences start, take hold, grow, struggle, fail and eventually succeed. His big ego sometimes got in the way of the story telling as he seemed defensive, but he did return to humor and an adequate level of humility soon enough to convey the burning spirit of a true adventurer.

Jonathan says

Perkins is a Valley Icon, but this memoir is not particularly substantive. There is some talk of the tumult at HP during the Fiorina reign and a few interesting anecdotes about the early days of HP and Kleiner Perkins. However, there are also random somewhat patronizing chapters about his love for sailboats and sports cars. Diverting at times but not the deepest of books.
