



# The Man Behind the Microchip: Robert Noyce and the Invention of Silicon Valley

By Leslie Berlin

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Hailed as the Thomas Edison *and* Henry Ford of Silicon Valley, Robert Noyce was a brilliant inventor, a leading entrepreneur, and a daring risk taker who piloted his own jets and skied mountains accessible only by helicopter. Now, in *The Man Behind the Microchip*, Leslie Berlin captures not only this colorful individual but also the vibrant interplay of technology, business, money, politics, and culture that defines Silicon Valley.

Here is the life of a high-tech industry giant. The co-founder of Fairchild Semiconductor and Intel, Noyce co-invented the integrated circuit, the electronic heart of every modern computer, automobile, cellular telephone, advanced weapon, and video game. With access to never-before-seen documents, Berlin paints a fascinating portrait of Noyce: an ambitious and intensely competitive multimillionaire who exuded a "just folks" sort of charm, a Midwestern preacher's son who rejected organized religion but would counsel his employees to "go off and do something wonderful," a man who never looked back and sometimes paid a price for it. In addition, this vivid narrative sheds light on Noyce's friends and associates, including some of the best-known managers, venture capitalists, and creative minds in Silicon Valley. Berlin draws upon interviews with dozens of key players in modern American business--including Andy Grove, Steve Jobs, Gordon Moore, and Warren Buffett; their recollections of Noyce give readers a privileged, first-hand look inside the dynamic world of high-tech entrepreneurship.

A modern American success story, *The Man Behind the Microchip* illuminates the triumphs and setbacks of one of the most important inventors and entrepreneurs of our time.

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## The Man Behind the Microchip: Robert Noyce and the Invention of Silicon Valley By Leslie Berlin Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #755161 in Books
- Published on: 2006-11-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.00" h x 1.00" w x 8.80" l, 1.30 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 440 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

By the high-tech boom of the 1990s, Intel CEO Andy Grove had become the man most commonly associated with the industry's leading manufacturer of microprocessors. But the real credit for creating Intel, Berlin argues, belongs to Noyce (1927–1990), who cofounded the company with Gordon Moore in 1968—a little more than a decade after the two men took part in the creation of another early Silicon Valley fixture, Fairchild Semiconductor. Berlin, a science historian at Stanford, provides a well-rounded biography that easily establishes Noyce's scientific credentials—in addition to holding the patent on the integrated circuit, he also just missed out on taking credit for two Nobel-worthy discoveries—as well as his bumpy path through the corporate world, which began when he was recruited by seven colleagues to break away from the research lab where they were employed to found Fairchild. Interviews with Noyce's contemporaries and family illuminate the less happy aspects of his personal life. With the bloom off the Internet economy, it may prove harder to generate interest in the life of a technology executive, but that shouldn't diminish Berlin's excellent work here. (*June*)

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### Review

"An important, hype-free account. And the bonus: Noyce was no geeky physicist, and his risk-taking zeal to create new things, coupled with a powerful commitment to ethics, powers a story that should be required reading for today's entrepreneurs and executives."--*Washington Post*

"A comprehensive and admiring biography.... Hopefully it can restore to proper renown a man once called the Thomas Edison and the Henry Ford of Silicon Valley.... Berlin does a fine job uncovering the details of Noyce's childhood and tracing his intellectual development.... Berlin writes convincingly.... [A] thorough and worthy retelling of his life."--*Washington Monthly*

"Leslie Berlin's meticulously researched biography tells the story of a talented but flawed individual whose successes and failures could serve as the raw material for a dozen business school case studies. It also paints a revealing picture of US business culture in the mid-20th century.... [An] evocative account of the birth of an industry."--*Financial Times*

"This is where Berlin is best: she superbly evokes the hacker inventiveness of Shockley and his gang."--Clive Thompson, *New York Times Book Review*

"All the busy billionaires, multimillionaires and geeks in their garages dreaming up the next big thing that will bring glory back to Silicon Valley should plunk down some loose change on 'The Man Behind the Microchip.' And anyone interested in the true creation story of Silicon Valley--in contrast to the enticing

tales of the mythmakers who continue to blow bubbles of promise up and down the Peninsula--would do well to make a small investment in this terrific biography."--John Christensen, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"The first full-scale biography of Noyce and the first book to acknowledge his true importance. Noyce's story is a fascinating one.... The book succeeds best as a business biography, putting his impressive accomplishments in perspective. Noyce should be considered one of the most influential inventors of our time, a prime mover of the digital revolution that has changed all our lives. For that he deserves much broader recognition. *The Man Behind the Microchip* is a great start in that direction."--*PC Magazine*

"Exhaustively researched."--*Houston Chronicle*

"Leslie Berlin does an excellent job of capturing the Bob Noyce I knew: part small-town boy, part big-time genius and always a wonderful friend and citizen."--Warren E. Buffett, Chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

"Bob Noyce's contributions to the development of the semiconductor industry go well beyond his inventions. He was industry spokesman, visionary, and leading entrepreneur. But this well written book does more than just chronicle his many contributions; it is a window into his complex and charming personality."--Gordon E. Moore, co-founder of Intel Corporation

"Leslie Berlin, in her highly readable biography of Noyce, describes how his work sparked two revolutions in the modern business and technology era."--Robert Weisman, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

"At last, the absorbing story of the most important figure in the history of the semiconductor industry! Meticulously researched, *The Man Behind the Microchip* is so engagingly narrated that you don't realize how much business and technology you are learning along the way."--William Aspray, Rudy Professor of Informatics, Indiana University

"At the white-hot epicenter of the digital revolution was Robert Noyce. Now, thanks to this incisive and astutely researched biography, Noyce will be forever listed among those inventor-entrepreneurs of the postwar era who functioned as the Johan Gutenbergs, the Alexander Graham Bells, the Guglielmo Marconis of our era."--Kevin Starr, University Professor of History, University of Southern California

About the Author

**Leslie Berlin** is Project Historian for the Silicon Valley Archives at Stanford University. For more

information, please visit <http://themanbehindthemicrochip.com>.

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#### **Elisa Dumont:**

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