

Obituaries

# Don Hoefler, writer who coined term 'Silicon Valley'

Don C. Hoefler, one of the first journalists to cover the local electronics industry and the man credited with coining the term "Silicon Valley," died Tuesday. He was 63.

Mr. Hoefler, who published a weekly newsletter called Microelectronics News from his home in South San Francisco, was hospitalized in March after suffering a stroke. He slipped into a coma in late March.

Mr. Hoefler published his newsletter, which was widely read by semiconductor industry executives and often proved to be controversial, for 14 years. His last issue appeared shortly before his stroke.

"He was liked by some, disliked by many and read by all," said Mal Padgett, publisher of Corporate Times, a local monthly newspaper for which Mr. Hoefler wrote a column.

In 1971, in a series of articles for Electronic News, a weekly trade

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— Publisher Mal Padgett

publication, Mr. Hoefler first used the term "Silicon Valley" to describe the conglomeration of electronics firms in the Santa Clara Valley.

In an article 10 years later in the Mercury News, Mr. Hoefler wrote, "The rationale was simple enough: These revolutionary semiconductors are made in a valley, from silicon — not silicone, please — the second most-abundant chemical element (after oxygen) on Earth.

"How was I to know that the term would quickly be adopted industry-wide, and finally become generic worldwide?"

But Mr. Hoefler's influence went beyond providing a popular mon-

iker for the region.

"He pioneered the coverage of Silicon Valley as a distinct community," said Michael S. Malone, author of a history of the local electronics industry called "The Big Score."

"In many ways, he created the image of Silicon Valley through his articles in Electronic News," Malone said. "When we think of Silicon Valley as collection of characters and eccentrics, he's the one who put that whole idea in our minds."

Mr. Hoefler's newsletter, Malone said, was "for a long time, the only way people could get the inside stories of Silicon Valley."

In a recent interview with the weekly newspaper Metro, Mr. Hoefler said he decided to become an electronics industry journalist because he had worked as a publicist for Fairchild Semiconductor, the area's first major semiconductor company, when the industry was still in its infancy.

At Fairchild, he met people such as Charles Sporck, who went on to

start and become president of National Semiconductor Corp. of Santa Clara, and Robert Noyce, a founder and now vice chairman of Intel Corp. of Santa Clara.

"I was in a position to call up these guys and say, 'Hi, Charlie, what's new?'" Mr. Hoefler told Metro. "Consequently, I was quickly able to build a reputation as Mr. Semiconductor."

Mr. Hoefler's family could not be reached for details about his early life. Before starting Microelectronics News, Mr. Hoefler worked as a reporter for Fairchild Publications, owner of Electronic News. He also worked for RCA Corp. and McGraw-Hill.

He is survived by his second wife, Rachel, of South San Francisco.



Don C. Hoefler  
... Electronics journalist