

Asshole Silicon Valley granddad and HP boss-killer Tom Perkins dies

CREATOR OF THE MOST CRIMINALLY CORRUPT VENTURE CAPITAL COMPANY IN SILICON VALLEY: KLEINER PERKINS

lousy social commentator



Engineer turned venture capitalist ... Tom Perkins ([Source](#))



10 Jun 2016 at 21:24, [Iain Thomson](#)

Obit Tom Perkins, seen by many as one of the grandfathers of Silicon Valley, has died at the age of 84 after a prolonged illness.

Perkins was born in White Plains, New York, in 1932 and showed an early interest in technology, earning a BS in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from MIT in 1953 and an MBA from Harvard four years later.

In 1963, he joined Hewlett-Packard as the manager of the firm's computer hardware division and stayed there for 10 years. In 1973, Perkins left his job and cofounded Kleiner Perkins, one of the first venture capital firms in the valley.

The move was bad news for HP, since two years later the firm turned down the chance to build personal computers when employee Steve Wozniak offered them his designs for what became the Apple I. Perkins would, most likely, have seen the enormous potential of Wozniak's designs.

His VC firm, later to become Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, funded the startup phases of companies like Compaq, Netscape, AOL, Lotus, Google, and Amazon. Perkins pioneered the strategy of installing senior mentors to keep firms' founders on an even keel.

"As a cofounder of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, Tom was a pioneer in the venture capital industry," said fellow partners Brook Byers and Frank Caufield in a statement to *The Register*.

"He defined what we know of today as entrepreneurial venture capital by going beyond just funding to helping entrepreneurs realize their visions with operating expertise. He was there at the start of the biotech industry and the computer revolution. Tom was our partner and friend, and we will miss him."

Both the firm and Perkins personally prospered from the startup investing, and Perkins served on the board of many technology companies, including Tandem and Compaq. In the latter role, he was a strong supporter of the merger between Compaq and HP in 2001, but that merger didn't end well.

In 2006, he publicly resigned from HP in a huff after chairwoman Patricia Dunn told the board that she had hired private investigators to tap into the phone logs of the directors and [some journalists](#) in an attempt to find out who was leaking company information to the press.

When he confirmed his reasons for quitting publicly several months later, a [criminal investigation](#) was launched into the affair, and [another](#) by the SEC. Dunn resigned and she, HP's former chief ethics officer Kevin Hunsaker, and three private investigators were charged with wire fraud and stealing computer information.

The charges against Dunn were dropped, but Hunsaker and the PIs got 96 hours of community service apiece for wire fraud. One of the investigators, Bryan Wagner, got [three months in jail](#) for conspiracy and identity theft.

Perkins emerged from the affair as something of a hero, although Dunn later claimed that the decision to go public was a [personal attack](#) on her rather than for strictly ethical outrage. He also didn't get on with former CEO Carly Fiorina.

After retiring from the firm, Perkins spent a lot of time sailing and in 2006 purchased the largest sailing yacht of its day, the 289-foot (88-metre) *Maltese Falcon*. The three-masted, square rigged sailing boat cost him "between \$150 and \$300m" and was built with no rigging, but rotated its masts under computer control via servers in the hull.

Perkins claimed to have written some of the code himself, and it enabled the huge ship to be sailed by a single person using a touchscreen. However, the downside of this was that if the computers went offline, the boat was virtually unsailable.

He also took time out to pen a romance novel called [Sex and the Single Zillionaire](#), in part inspired by his second wife Danielle Steele. The tale of a wealthy investor in his 60s looking to find a wife on a reality TV show did not fly off the shelves.

Perkins was publicly disavowed by the firm he founded in 2014, after he wrote an [open letter](#) [subscription required] in the *Wall Street Journal* [claiming](#) that the Occupy Wall Street movement and protests against the bussing of technology workers by Google and others around San Francisco was akin to the Nazi pogroms against Jews.

"I perceive a rising tide of hatred of the successful one percent," he wrote. "This is a very dangerous drift in our American thinking. Kristallnacht was unthinkable in 1930; is its descendant 'progressive' radicalism unthinkable now?"

The remarks caused a storm, but Perkins doubled down on them in a talk at the Commonwealth Club a month afterwards that [this hack attended](#). He apologized for using the term Kristallnacht, but accused President Obama of persecuting the rich and called for a poll tax so that only taxpayers could vote.

"The Tom Perkins system is: you don't get to vote unless you pay a dollar of taxes," he said. "But what I really think is, it should be like a corporation. You pay a million dollars in taxes, you get a million votes."

After the talk, in a private press session, Perkins said he was trying to be outrageous, but refused to disavow his idea of no representation without taxation explicitly. He also praised the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, saying America needed someone of her caliber to sort out the economy.

After the affair, Perkins stopped making public statements and stepped back from public life, preferring to spend his time sailing and living in Silicon Valley. He is survived by two children. ®

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