

Lenny Siegel & John Markoff
Pacific Studies Center
~~867 W. Dana #204~~
Mountain View, CA 94041
(415)969-1545

WOMAN & CHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND

The lobby of the Decathlon Club is a vast, greenery-covered atrium. Fountains and streams play softly and light sparkles through the skylights from above. Outside during lunchtime on a sunny Tuesday, Mercedes, Porsches and Cadillacs choke the parking lot. The club, which features tennis, racquetball, squash, and a swimming pool, as well as other amenities such as a fashionable restaurant and bar, is nestled in a high-tech industrial park at the heart of California's Silicon Valley.

Modern library
Surrounded by microelectronics factories that often resemble college campuses, the Decathlon Club symbolizes the amazing success of Silicon Valley and its much heralded lifestyle. Situated on the once-tranquil San Francisco Peninsula, the Valley portrays a dramatic contrast to a sluggish American economy. Here in Silicon Valley vast fortunes have been made during the last two

Promised Land

decades and some of the industry's most successful men and women regularly lunch at the Decathlon Club.

Linda Cartlidge is one of those success stories. Her company, Cartlidge & Associates, stages elaborate trade shows like the Advanced Semiconductor Equipment Expo and the Word Processing and Office Equipment Expo. The company takes in \$2 million a year, has ten full-time employees, and hires up to two hundred women and men to help run the shows.

Linda seems to know everyone at the Decathlon Club. She carries her jogging suit, which she uses at one of the Club's aerobics classes, in the back seat of her Cadillac. As a working mother, she was instrumental in the establishment of child care facilities at the Club.

Linda started working in the industry in the early 1960's, long before the area was dubbed Silicon Valley by her friend, industry analyst Don Hoefler. As lunch is served, she recalls, "When I started my work in the Valley, I was the youngest professional personnel counselor. My accounts included large electronics corporations like Fairchild and Hewlett-Packard. After I got married, had a child, and came back to this area I had to become a secretary. . . . If I had been a man and a job counselor I would have just gone on with my profession, but because I had a child I didn't see anyway I could play the game."

The "game," according to Linda, is that the working day doesn't end at five o'clock. As a result, unless there's an ar-

Promised Land

rangement between the husband and wife to share duties, it becomes almost impossible for the women to make the networks that she needs to succeed.

In the mid-Sixties, after her divorce, Linda tried to be the "gay, divorced, secretary. . . My pigeon-hole was to look real cute, wear a miniskirt, have long hair and false eyelashes, make all the bosses feel real good, and then I'd do my nice little job of picking my son up from child care centers." Those centers, she notes, cost 30% of her salary.

Linda soon found her pigeonhole dissatisfying. She left her son with her parents in Palo Alto and went to Europe for six months. Then, for six months she took courses and studied the industry. She signed on with a small company that sponsored trade shows, and within two years she became a vice-president. Several years ago she formed her own firm.

Linda beams, "Microelectronics is one of the few areas where a woman has a chance to advance very quickly. Anytime you get into a new and burgeoning environment there's a chance for you to get in not only on the ground floor, but to meet the type of people who can help you advance."

But it hasn't been easy. It was hard to support two people on a secretary's budget. She laughs, "We starved alot." When she moved into managerial positions, keeping long hours, Linda put her son in a boarding school during the week. She adds, "I still feel guilty because he spent so many evenings alone." But she

Promised Land

knows of no workable alternative, and she suggests that Cord, now a 6'-3" 16-year old, may be more self-reliant as a result. And Linda considers herself fortunate, "It's almost literally impossible for any woman in the lower echelons of the electronics industry to have a very satisfactory life or to get ahead if they are supporting their children, because most of the companies haven't caught up with the idea of in-house child care centers."

In fact, most women in Silicon Valley work in the "lower echelons." Not only are there large numbers of clerical workers, but most of the Valley's low-paying - starting at \$3.50 to \$5.00/hour - assembly positions are held by women. Thousands of Anglos, Chicanas, Filipinas, Blacks, and Indochinese labor long hours in semiconductor wafer fabrication, where they work with a range of dangerous chemicals, or do painstaking printed circuit board assembly. There are few avenues upward for those women, but there are opportunities for skilled women to work their way into professional and managerial roles.

Holly Olson started out in drafting, but now is a top-notch electronic circuit designer. Unlike Linda, however, Holly did not choose her career after studying a range of possibilities. Holly would rather paint canvasses along the California coastline, but she designs printed circuit boards to support her 8-year old daughter, Heidi.

Holly joined Magnuson Computers Systems of San Jose in 1977 as its 13th employee. Company founder Paul Magnuson drove Heidi

Promised Land

to nursery school so Holly could work "day and night" for the company. Holly also worked at home: "Heidi almost destroyed the plans for Magnuson's first integrated circuit board when she crashed her tricycle into the light table in our living room," she remembers.

Although Holly has upgraded her career, she feels that it is harder to succeed as a woman: "I'm always second. I may be the best designer in a company, but there is always a man above me." She adds, "A lot of business here is done in bars. Being a working mother, you're excluded. You can't afford to pay for drinks. You have to pick up your kid. You have to deal with men you don't like."

Sitting in the living room of her rented tract home in Mountain View, Holly recounts, "If I were a man, I could have paid cash for this house, even at today's housing prices" - Silicon Valley housing is among the costliest in the nation. *Before Magnuson* She *next financial problems, she explained* explains that like other early Magnuson employees, she was paid partially in stock. "It would have made me rich if I had held onto it, but I needed the money to survive. The guy who bought the stock has a beautiful home now." He had no child to support at the time, and could share housing with roommates. "Now he claims he owes me a dinner!"

Before Holly moved into her current house, she shared a rented house in Palo Alto with her friend Vicki, another single mother. Sharing helped financially, and child care was easier

Promised Land

when pressing projects forced Holly to work long hours, but "I got tired of living out of boxes." It took her six months to find a place of her own, at \$650 per month. In Silicon Valley, that's considered a bargain. Still, she fears, "This house is gonna kill me."

Holly is no stranger to Silicon Valley's housing shortage. "When I first got my divorce and was looking for an apartment, only two apartments in the Sunnyvale to Palo Alto area would rent to me. One looked like a ghetto. The other I moved into. They didn't clean it because they knew I was lucky to get the place. I got no services."

Silicon Valley, like many other housing-short areas, is noted for discrimination against families - and single parents in particular - in rental housing. *The recent State Supreme Court decision outlawing discrimination on the basis of marital status*

Holly has had a great deal of trouble finding child care to suit her long working hours. At Magnuson, she would bring Heidi to work at night or week-ends. Heidi would sleep under her desk. Sometimes they would be the only two people in the entire building. Last December she shared child care with a friend. At times her friend took Heidi, but over Christmas Holly had to bring Heidi and her friend's two daughters to work with her. "You have to drive a kid to school and still get to work on time. I've never been to work on time in the last four years. School and job both start at 8:00 a.m."

Promised Land

Holly resents her life-style. "I work, take care of Heidi, and it's 11:00 before its my time. That's no way to live. . . . I don't get to have much fun with her. . . . Sometimes I think of myself as someone swimming in the ocean, holding Heidi above the water, and lifting my head every once in a while to breathe."

She tells about another woman, who worked her way up from assembly into drafting. Living costs were so high that, says Holly, "She was forced to live with a guy. After six months, she sent for her child, who had stayed back in Denver with the woman's mother. The guy moved out. She got a roommate. The roommate wrecked her car. She moved back to Denver."

Debra Wade, an accounts receivable clerk at Rolm, a large telecommunications company, is a more recent arrival from Denver. Her marriage broke up last year, so in September she and her three-year old son, Rob, returned to live, temporarily they hoped, at Debra's parents' house in Silicon Valley.

Debra likes Rolm, despite her entry level pay of \$5.10 per hour. She hopes to move into management eventually, and notes that the company offers training programs and even tuition subsidies. She laments, "School is not practical now," because she normally works 55 hours a week - by choice - and has a son to take care of.

Debra's biggest problem is housing. Living with her folks has grown difficult for everyone involved. After visiting one apartment complex which required that prospective tenants have an

Promised Land

income of at least \$1700 per month, she joined a long waiting list for low-income housing.

Unlike many other Silicon Valley women, Debra has not relied on her family for child care assistance. "I checked the newspapers for sitters. After a number of interviews, I chose Emma. I drop Rob off at 6:00 to 6:30 in the morning, and I pick him up at 6:00 to 7:30 at night." Emma feeds Rob, bathes him, and takes care of him even when he's sick. Debra is fully satisfied at \$55 per week, but it's still quite a drive.

Debra has "chosen not to use" the fabled recreational facilities at the company's Santa Clara "campus," which include a swimming pool and modern gymnasium. It's more important for her to work overtime to pay an attorney who's trying to force her ex-husband to pay child support.

Laurie, an administrator at ESL, a high-tech defense contractor, who began at the switchboard, has had a more amicable divorce. She owns her San Jose condominium, but she got credit only with her ex-husband's help. In fact, her down payment came from the refinancing of their house, which formerly belonged to her husband's grandparents.

Nevertheless, Laurie says that work was a big factor in her divorce. "My husband, despite his youth, believed 'Women stay home in the kitchen,' But returning to work with a two-year old at home was one of the best things I've done."

Promised Land

Still, she's pleased that she and her ex-husband are friends. Other than their four-year old daughter, Laurie has no family in California.

In more cases than not, it appears, marriage and electronics don't mix. Sometimes it's hard for two professionals to find jobs in the same city. Jill, a training manager at a major Silicon Valley company, is virtually a single parent much of the year. In September her husband returned to Eugene, where he teaches at the University of Oregon.

In other cases, the man just cannot adjust to his wife's long hours. Linda Cartlidge says, "A lot of women get divorced . . . just because they don't want to take care of both the children and husband."

Cheryl Nobari, an electronics entrepreneur ^{with 2 daughters} ~~whose husband~~ ~~works outside the country~~, suggests, "Many professional women get caught up in the excitement of their work, or get so optimistic about their abilities that their husbands can't adjust." To illustrate the importance that many Silicon Valley women place on their jobs, she tells the story of a friend who is dating the vice-president of her company. "What do they talk about during intimate moments? Research and development."

At other times it's the job, not the marriage, that gives way. One woman, who works part-time to get out of the house, won't work more because she nets only 50 cents an hour after taxes and child care.

Promised Land

Cheryl warns of another problem for working mothers in the suburban sprawl of Silicon Valley. She spends at least an hour each day trucking her two kids around. Picking up her daughter at school at five o'clock is a problem when she's in an important meeting, *like her husband is out of the country*, ~~although she is usually able to get her brother-in-law or a friend to help.~~

Millie Clarke, a third-level manager at IBM in San Jose, insists that most of the working mothers she knows are, like herself, still married. She transferred to San Jose from an IBM facility in Southern California in 1975, when her PhD chemist husband was offered a job at IBM. With two professional incomes, Millie and her husband have been able to avoid many the obstacles that single working mothers face. They own their house in Almaden Valley, San Jose, and employ a full-time housekeeper. Since she came to San Jose, Millie has given birth to two boys. She took off three months for the first one, two months for the second.

Perhaps the most fortunate working mothers are married women, who, backed by a husband's steady income, are able to launch their own small businesses. Virginia Daniel, Technical Publication Manager at EIP Microwave, knows married women who have established typesetting and personnel businesses. "That's where the money is," she says.

To survive in Silicon Valley, working mothers - married or not - have established networks of personal support. Newcomers usually have no family here, so they turn elsewhere.

Promised Land

One growing group of women, which includes mothers such as Millie and Laurie as well as childless women, is Women in Information Processing (WIP). Donna Brown, head of the local WIP chapter, says the group has monthly "network meetings" where its 65 members can discuss both career and personal problems. She says, "Prejudice is rampant in some Silicon Valley companies, but it is usually subtle." In response to what Donna calls "men's room politics," women are getting together on their own turf. [WIP can be reached c/o Donna Brown, 1142 Pomegranate Ct., Sunnyvale, CA, 94087 or 408-733-4032]

Most working mothers believe that Silicon Valley is a great place to live and to bring up kids. They note the climate and the accessibility of the beach and Carmel, San Francisco, Yosemite and the Sierras, and the wineries. Most like the schools, although in recent years the quality has declined. Silicon Valley's greatest liability, in fact, is its popularity. Many say, "It's too crowded."

Still, for a woman with skills and the drive to get ahead, Silicon Valley is the Promised Land. But don't come here unless you've got lots of credentials or a place to live, as well as family and friends to help with child care.

Nancy, an executive secretary/administrative assistant in Silicon Valley, makes twice what she made 15 months ago as a legal secretary in San Diego. She enthuses, "Of all the places in the country for a single woman, this is probably the best. You

Promised Land

can make more and get further." But she still pays \$500 each month for care for her seven-year old daughter and five-year old boy.

Cheryl Nobari warns, "It's possible to advance here, more than any other area. This means good things for the woman, but her children may suffer."

Lenny Siegel is Director of the Pacific Studies Center, a small research group in Silicon Valley. John Markoff is a senior editor at InfoWorld, a microcomputer newspaper.