

Nicholas Szabo, '53

1930-2015

Technology executive and former Cupertino mayor

Nick Szabo was a Silicon Valley engineer and local politician who in many ways embodied the American Dream. A refugee from the Communist takeover in his native Hungary, he entered the USA in 1949 without a valid passport. He was accepted to attend the California Institute of Technology, where he received a bachelor's degree in physics and studied under several of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's greatest scientific figures, among them the Nobel Laureates Linus Pauling and Richard Feynman. He met his future wife, Marcia Purcifull, who was then a librarian at the school, when checking out a book.

After college, and while technically still an illegal immigrant, he was drafted and began serving in the Army. When the military realized its error, they began discharge and deportation proceedings. Fortunately, Nick was able to call in a high level connection - Caltech's President at the time, Lee DuBridge, was also Science Advisor to the President of the United States. Through DuBridge's intervention, he was allowed to remain in the Army and was eventually made a citizen by Act of Congress.

He would go on to receive a master's degree from Stanford and a Ph.D. in Computer Science from UC Berkeley, with a minor in Law. Nick went on to a distinguished career as an engineer with several of Silicon Valley's leading companies, including Hewlett-Packard, Lockheed and KLA-Tencor. His most important role was as Director of Research and Development for Singer-Link, the world's leading developer of aircraft simulators. At one point, virtually all American pilots received their training in simulators developed under Nick's direction. In the 1980s, Nick took an interest in local politics. An unlikely candidate with prominent, uneven teeth and a strong Eastern European accent, he nevertheless won election to the Cupertino City Council and later went on to become Mayor. He played an important role in the planning of the city as Cupertino became known internationally as the home of Apple Computer.

In retirement he deepened his interest in legal and political matters and frequently contributed to public discourse on major issues in American society, such as the rising cost of health care.

Nick Szabo was a generous and honest man whose family and colleagues will remember him for his extraordinarily logical mind and his passion for finding things out. He exuded enthusiasm telling stories around the dinner table about his wonderful experience at Caltech and the many famous and colorful scientists he had the opportunity to know. These tales inspired both of his sons to pursue careers in science - Alex attending rival MIT and Andrew attending the University of Wisconsin.

Starting with nothing but a keen intelligence and strong work ethic, Nick Szabo led a full life and made important contributions to the tech industry and to the California community. He is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Marcia, his sons Alex and Andrew, and five grandchildren.