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Tech executive became teacher for Silicon Valley

This moving tribute explains why former Intel CEO Andy Grove was revered by so many

by [Jena McGregor](#)



Former Intel CEO and Chairman Andrew Grove (left), after a press conference in 1993. Grove died Monday, prompting an outpouring of remembrances from technology luminaries and other leaders. (AP Photo/George Nikitin)

The technology world has lost an icon. Andy Grove, the former chairman and chief executive of Intel, died Monday, eliciting an [outpouring](#) of remembrances, memories and eulogies from leaders in Silicon Valley and far beyond.

Apple CEO Tim Cook [tweeted](#) that Grove "epitomized America at his best." Gates Foundation CEO Sue Desmond-Hellman [tweeted](#) "I treasure the time Andy Grove spent mentoring me as @UCSF Chancellor. He was fierce & funny; truly one of a kind." Cancer researcher David Agus [called](#) Grove--known for being gruff and demanding yet also generous with his time--"grumpy, nasty, brilliant & inspirational all at once." Former General Electric chief Jack Welch [wrote](#) that the "world lost a great leader, courageous entrepreneur, savvy businessman and just terrific person with passing of Andy Grove."

One of the most heartfelt comes from venture capitalist [Ben Horowitz](#). A partner in the [firm](#) that has backed companies such as Facebook and Pinterest, Horowitz [wrote](#) on Twitter Monday night he was "shedding a few tears tonight for my hero and the best CEO and teacher I have ever known. Goodbye Andy. I love you." Horowitz's moving [tribute](#) to Grove in September, when presenting him with an award by Silicon Valley's [Churchill Club](#), was being circulated on Twitter.

There's a reason such personal remembrances are coming from so many corners, and it's summed up well in that September testimonial, which features laudatory remarks from Silicon Valley heavyweights ranging from venture capitalist John Doerr to Mark Zuckerberg. Grove built Intel into a powerhouse by famously redirecting the company from the memory business into the microprocessor business, one of the defining case studies of how to confront [disruptive](#) industry forces.

In the tribute, Grove is credited with nothing less than building Silicon Valley itself. That's not only because the company he led became the dominant maker of microprocessors inside computers, but because of how he shaped the culture that underlies the industry--which, in its better moments, is known for intellectual curiosity, the sharing of ideas, and a relentless focus on the future.

Yet Grove was much more than an effective adviser and visionary CEO. Born to a Jewish family, he was a political refugee who survived the Nazis, fled Hungary after Soviet tanks rolled in, and taught himself English, going on to earn a PhD and publish a textbook on semiconductors.

He was a philanthropist known as both an [advocate and agitator](#) for better and faster medical research. He was an author and thinker who wrote widely about his battle with [prostate cancer](#), the [economy](#), management and leadership. His most well-known book may have been "Only the Paranoid Survive," where he [posed](#) the question many corporate leaders have been trained to ask themselves: "If we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what do you think he would do?"

Lesser known, but likely more influential, is "[High Output Management](#)," published in 1983. It's a technical guide for managers that's developed a cult following among today's Silicon Valley leaders. (When I [wrote](#) about its popularity last year, one software engineer called it "the 'Big Lebowski' of business leadership books.") Reissued last year in response to the demand, it's where Grove wrote about the now widely used "management by objective" approach. It's the rare

business book by a major CEO that seems written not to burnish a legacy, promote a career, or publicize a company's achievements, but to help other managers simply do their jobs better.

The book is popular in part because it's written with an engineer's eye for dealing with basic management problems--how to hold meetings, how to interview people--and because it comes from a credible, tough, experienced leader known for keeping high standards and having little patience for the fads and pop theories of the day. (The only time I interviewed Andy Grove, for a [BusinessWeek story](#) back in 2007 about Corporate America's fascination with the process of "innovation," he responded with characteristic straight talk. "In my view, the word innovation has become overused, clichéd, and meaningless," he said. "I detest the mechanism that spits [such fads] up because they are so much easier to talk about than to do.")

Which brings us back to Horowitz's tribute. In addition to talking about the influence of "High Output Management," which Horowitz played a big role in reviving, he recounts Grove's life story and his exacting-yet-personal management style. "I think the best way to honor him is to try to live up to his standard--that means when we see someone who comes to us with nothing, who just wants to do something, we need to help them," Horowitz said.

At the end of the tribute, Grove took the stage, clearly battling the effects of Parkinson's disease. He asked if he could say a few words. There was no small talk, no thank you for the kind tribute, no reflections on his career. He went directly to reminding the audience what might be done to [help others](#), namely the refugees fleeing Syria that were in the headlines at the time.

"As we sit here and go through what each of us have done, our colleagues have done, my contemporaries have done," he said, "let's remember that millions of young people who had the misfortune of being born in the wrong national boundaries are going through all the horrors that Ben described I had to go through. I made it. Let's try a little way to help them make it."

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