

I have returned from three weeks in California, where I resided with my youngest son and his wife in the East Bay, who both work in the high-tech industry. Their five-year-old son has a brand-new baby sister.

Inasmuch as Walter Isaacson's biography of the late Steve Jobs was all the rage—you couldn't turn on the radio or television without hearing about it—I read the 600-page tome while there. It recalled the time when the transistor-chip industry transformed Santa Clara Valley into Silicon Valley.

When Steve Jobs and Stephen Wozniac tinkered in Jobs's dad's Mountain View garage to produce the Apple I and Apple II, we lived in adjoining Santa Clara. My husband Darold having switched from engineering to lawyering, we soon moved to a quieter spot on the central coast. There I worked in our office, word-processing documents on a "computerized" typewriter that featured a tiny window through which you watched the sentences march past as you typed. If you were quick with proofreading and editing, you entered corrections right then, which was vastly preferable to changing hard copy: locating a particular document and, worse, a specific page, on the magnetic cards that stored the files, was cumbersome and frustrating. The system had this going for itself: previously you retyped pages and pages of a trust or will or contract when, after a client's review, some paragraph had to be added or deleted. Now, the repagination happened effortlessly and the reprinting proceeded automatically.

In the mid-1980s we acquired a client who insisted that his computer "speak" to our office (via some sort of modem—email did not yet exist). The client insisted we use the Macintosh Steve Jobs and his team had just developed. Thus we experienced first-hand the Apple Revolution's desktop publishing. Inasmuch as computer-use extends the human voice, we received more detailed client input, which led to a more concise articulation of legal intent. The once-musty legalese transformed itself into a succinct language, as it were in the blink of an eye.

Yet for all his creativity and extraordinary ideas, Steve Jobs was volatile, arrogant and maniacal. According to Isaacson, he could pour on the charm when it suited his purpose, but he seems to have cared not a whit about people's feelings even as he exploited (often outright stole) their ideas. Ruthlessly controlling himself, he nonetheless carried a lifelong aversion to authority. As a teenager fascinated with electronics, Steve embraced the counterculture, the music of Bob Dylan, Zen Buddhism, and LSD. He remained devoted to his ideals though he dropped the drug use, substituting eating disorders instead. Regrettably, the peace he sought in Zen seems to have eluded him. He abused, berated, and belittled the people around him, driving them to fury and despair. He tended to categorize in binary fashion: they were either "enlightened" or "an asshole," their work either "the best" or "totally shitty."

"I could not abide his unkindness," Isaacson quotes Tina Redse, who lived with Jobs off and on but in the end turned down his marriage proposal. "I didn't want to hurt him, yet I didn't want to stand by and watch him hurt other people, either. It was painful and

exhausting.” Redse believed Jobs suffered from Narcissistic Personality Disorder, which would explain, she concluded, his inability to empathize.

Surprisingly, Isaacson does not raise the possibility of Aspergers; Redse’s explanation seems a bit facile. Jobs eventually paired with Laurene Powell in a twenty-year marriage that produced three children and, says Isaacson, “remained faithful.” Surrounded by his family, Jobs died in October 2011 of complications from pancreatic cancer.

Jobs was born in 1955 to Joanna Schieble, a young woman of German descent. His father was Abdulfattah Jandali, a Muslim from a prominent Syrian family who completed undergraduate studies at American University in Beirut before entering PhD studies at U of Wisconsin. Because her father was vehemently opposed to his daughter marrying a non-Catholic, Joanna had her baby in secret and gave him up for adoption. Procedural and personal problems caused a ten-month delay before Steve could truly be at home with Paul and Clara Jobs, who subsequently adopted a girl as well.

The electronics revolution itself has a dark side. It happened, I was driving home from Denver as KUNC aired *This American Life* with excerpts from a Mike Daisey monologue, “The Irony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs.” I instantly recalled the headline on a March 2011 *Wired* Magazine: “One Million Workers. 90 Million iPhones. 17 Suicides.”

The KUNC broadcast came under the title, “Mr. Daisey and the Apple Factory.” Daisey visited Shenzhen, a city in southern China that did not exist thirty years ago. There Foxconn, the single largest private employer in mainland China, manufactures the motherboards, camera components, MP3 players, etc., that make up the world’s \$150 billion consumer-electronics industry. Every building in Shenzhen is skirted with nets, installed to prevent employees jumping to their deaths.

From Daisey we catch disconcerting glimpses of the causes of employee despair. The segment, # 454 of *This American Life*, originally aired on January 6, 2012. It is offered for listening on the KUNC website.