

# MARKING THE MASSES

THOMAS J. HUGHES

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BY THOMAS J. HUGHES

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# Introduction

## **Bel Air, Los Angeles – 1961**

The house glowed golden against the dark night. The air gently vibrated with mellow music and quiet conversation, punctuated by soft eruptions of laughter. It was not a raucous party, nothing for the neighbors to complain about.

But the currents of history flowed into and through that quiet dinner party. Amazing people filled the house, people intent on turning history's page from the past to the future. They were 20th century men molding the 21st century world.

Even the home would become legendary. Henry Singleton had commissioned famed architect Richard Neutra to design it, and it had been completed in 1959. Located on Mulholland Drive, in the Bel Air section of Los Angeles, today it is known as the "Singleton House."

Like Henry Singleton, most of his guests that night were associated with a newly-formed company called Teledyne. Singleton co-founded Teledyne in 1960. He would serve as CEO until

1986 and as Board Chairman until 1991. George Kozmetsky, the other co-founder, was also present at the party that night. Another Board member present was Arthur Rock. Singleton and Kozmetsky formed Teledyne with a \$450,000 investment from Rock. He would later make key, early investments in Intel and Apple.

A fourth Board member was also present that night — Claude Shannon. You may never have heard of Shannon, but every minute of every day his ideas influence your life. He is known as the “father of information theory.” Jimmy Soni and Rob Goodman wrote a book whose title explains Shannon’s importance — *A Mind at Play: How Claude Shannon Invented the Information Age*.<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, The New Yorker ran an article commemorating what would have been Shannon’s 100th birthday. In it, science writer James Gleick said, “Einstein looms large, and rightly so. But we’re not living in the relativity age, we’re living in the information age. It’s Shannon whose fingerprints are on every electronic device we own, every computer screen we gaze into, every means of digital communication. He’s one of these people who so transform the world that, after the transformation, the old world is forgotten.”

The Prologue of Gleick’s book, *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*, begins with a Shannon quote. Then it says, “After 1948, which was the crucial year, people thought they could see the clear purpose that inspired Claude Shannon’s work, but that was hindsight.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *A Mind at Play: How Claude Shannon Invented the Information Age* by Jimmy Soni and Rob Goodman, Simon & Schuster, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* by James Gleick, Pantheon Books, 2011.

Gleick then spoke of two world-changing things — an object and an idea — that emerged from Bell Telephone Laboratories that “crucial year.” One was a monograph written by Shannon called, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication.” He soon published it in book form, appropriately renamed, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. The monograph introduced the term “bit” as a measurement of information. It helped science to see information as something measurable — a product, a commodity, and not insubstantial.

The other thing that came out of Bell Labs at that time was the transistor,<sup>3</sup> the small semiconductor that makes modern electronics physically possible. Historians credit three men with the invention. They later received the Nobel Prize for their work. One of them, William Shockley, was also at the party that night.

After helping to invent the transistor, unlike his co-inventors, Shockley went to work perfecting it. He started Shockley Semiconductor Laboratory in 1956. He placed it in the Mountain View/Palo Alto area of California because Palo Alto was his hometown, and he wanted his company to be near his elderly mother. Shockley Semiconductor Laboratory was the first establishment working on silicon semiconductors in what we now call Silicon Valley. Members of his team went on to found some of the most famous and influential companies in history. He is

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<sup>3</sup> On December 23, 1947, William Shockley, John Bardeen, and Walter Brattain were able to demonstrate transistor amplification. Most reference works consider that the date of the transistor’s invention. Gleick referenced 1948 because that was the year Bell Labs announced the invention and probably because that was the year Shockley invented the bipolar junction transistor (BJT), for the first time using a silicon base, and opening the door for actual commercial use of transistors. In the October 11, 2019 issue of *ElectronicDesign*, Lou Frenzel wrote, “The invention of the bipolar junction transistor [in 1948] was the milestone that kicked off the semiconductor industries.”

known as “the man who brought silicon to Silicon Valley.”

Later in life he became an open advocate of eugenics.

There were others there that night whose names you will not find in history books, but many of them also played roles in inventing the future. One of them was my dad, Jim Hughes. At age thirty, he was one of many present that evening — including Singleton and Kozmetsky — who had come from Litton Industries.

Through the years, I had heard my dad mention the Bel Air party. One part of his story particularly fascinated me. So, in March of 2022, I recorded a conversation with him, by then in his nineties. I asked him to tell me again what he remembered about that party. He told about some of the individuals there that night and their historical importance. Then came the intriguing part.

## **The Backyard Overlooking the World**

A night drive along Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles offers breathtaking vistas. On one side, a traveler sees the vast San Fernando Valley with iconic film studios. On the other side, he can gaze out on the Los Angeles basin.

The Singleton House sits on the basin or south side of the road. Its backyard overlooks a vast portion of the Los Angeles area including Beverly Hills and downtown. On a clear night, the view extends beyond Los Angeles into Long Beach and into Orange County cities such as Anaheim, Santa Ana, Huntington Beach, and Irvine. By 1961, millions of people lived within the view of that backyard.

At the party, my father and several other men stepped into the yard to take in the view. They looked out at the lights that seemed to go on forever, and they chatted. Then one of them

said, “Someday, we’re gonna control all of the people that you see out there.”

More than sixty years later, my nonagenarian father clearly remembers the statement, but he’s not certain who said it. He thinks it might have been Claude Shannon, the father of information theory. But he doesn’t know. Neither is he sure what the statement meant. Still, as he told me in 2022, “It really struck me and stuck with me all of my life.”

### **A Master Plan**

Most prophecy students agree with James Gleick’s statement, “1948... was the crucial year.” But we have different reasons. He said it because the information age was built on Shannon’s 1948 work and because the transistor made its entrance into the world possible.

In Bible prophecy, 1948 is also the crucial year. In that year, God fulfilled His ancient promise to give Israel a national rebirth. It is the prophecy that gives meaning to all the signs of the times. It is the prophetic sign that makes everything else fit. And it is as unlikely, and therefore as much of a miracle, as the parting of the Red Sea.

Today, for the first time in history, humans are gaining the ability to make possible the literal fulfillment of Bible prophecy regarding the Mark of the Beast. My dad’s story made me realize that the intellectual and technical innovations of the information age burst onto the world scene the same year Israel did.

And with the information age still in infancy, my own father heard one of its inventors make the prophetically jaw-dropping statement, “Someday, we’re gonna control all of the people that you see out there.”