

Brochure | HP Corporate Archives

Bill Hewlett

Biography



Early years

Bill was born May 20, 1913, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He grew up in San Francisco and attended Stanford University, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in 1934. He earned a master's degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1936 and the degree of Engineer from Stanford University in 1939.

Bill met Dave Packard during their undergraduate days at Stanford. The two engineering classmates became friends and formed a partnership known as Hewlett-Packard Company in 1939.

While in graduate school at Stanford, Bill developed a design for a resistance-capacitance audio oscillator. This became HP's first product. The company's first manufacturing facility was a small garage in Palo Alto, and the initial working capital amounted to \$538.

Career at HP

Bill was actively involved in the management of the company until 1987, with the exception of the years he served as an Army officer during World War II. He was on the staff of the Army's Chief Signal Officer, and then headed the electronics section of the new Development Division of the War Department Special Staff. During this latter tour of duty, he was on a special U.S. team that inspected Japanese industry immediately after the war.

In 1947, shortly after he returned to Palo Alto, Bill was named vice president of HP. He was elected executive vice president in 1957, president in 1964, and was named chief executive officer in 1969.

Bill resigned as president in 1977 and retired as CEO in accordance with his previously announced plans for management succession within HP. He then served as chairman of HP's executive committee until 1983, when he became vice chairman of the HP board of directors. In 1987, he was named director emeritus, a position he held until his death on January 12, 2001.

Cover

Bill in his office c.1970.

This page

Bill had a life long love of the outdoors; here he is rappelling down Mt. Owen in Wyoming in 1930.





Left

Visiting Japan in 1969, Bill (center) sees the newest products of Yokogawa-Hewlett-Packard (YHP), established as a joint venture in 1963.

Right

Bill makes a point in his office in 1963.

Achievements

Over the years, Bill contributed to the advancement of various organizations within the electronics industry. From 1950 to 1957, he was on the board of directors of the Institute of Radio Engineers—now the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)—and served as president of the institute in 1954. He also played an important role in the development of the former Western Electronic Manufacturers Association, now called the American Electronics Association. In 1985, then- President Reagan awarded him the National Medal of Science, the nation’s highest scientific honor.

Bill had a keen interest in education and medicine. He was a trustee of Mills College in Oakland, California, from 1958 to 1968, and Stanford University from 1963 to 1974, and was a member of the San Francisco regional panel of the Commission on White House Fellows from 1969 to 1970.

He served as board president of the Palo Alto-Stanford Hospital Center (now Stanford Medical Center) from 1956 to 1958 and as a director from 1958 to 1962. He was a director of the Kaiser Foundation Hospital and Health Plan from 1972 to 1978, and the Drug Abuse Council in Washington, D.C. from 1972 to 1974.

Bill was an honorary trustee of the California Academy of Sciences, a member of the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Carnegie Institution, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

From 1966 to 1994, he served as chairman of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Until his death, he served as Chairman Emeritus of the foundation. In 1995, Bill supported the founding of the Public Policy Institute of California with an endowment of \$70 million. The institute performs independent analyses of major economic, social, and political issues facing California. He served as director of the Monterey Bay Research Institute from 1987 to 1998.

Bill held 13 honorary degrees from American colleges and universities, and an honorary doctor of electronic science degree from the University of Bologna in Italy.

In October 1999, Bill received the Eta Kappa Nu Association’s Eminent Member Award.

Bill had a wide range of interests and hobbies, most of them based on his love for the outdoors. He had a passion for wildflower photography and, in true engineer style, hand-classified his prints in bound volumes of metal flip files. He was an accomplished mountain climber, skier and fisherman. He also maintained several ranching and cattle-raising operations with Dave Packard in California and Idaho.

Curriculum vitae

William R. Hewlett

Birth

— May 20, 1913, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Death

— January 12, 2001

Married

— Rosemary Bradford Hewlett,
May 24, 1978

— Flora Lamson Hewlett, August 10, 1939
(deceased February 9, 1977)

Education

— Stanford University - A.B., 1934

— Massachusetts Institute of Technology -
M.S., 1936

— Stanford University - Engineer, 1939

Honorary degrees

— University of California at Berkeley -
LL.D., 1966

— Yale University - LL.D., 1976

— Kenyon College - D.Sc., 1978

— Polytechnic Institute of New York -
D.Sc., 1978

— University of Notre Dame - D.Eng., 1980

— Utah State University - D.Eng., 1980

— Dartmouth College - D.Eng., 1983

— Mills College - LL.D., 1983

— Johns Hopkins University - LH.D., 1985

— Rand Graduate Institute - Doctor of Public
Policy, 1985

— University of Bologna, Italy -
Doctor of Electronic Science, 1989

— Santa Clara University -
Doctor of Humanities, 1991

— Marquette University - LL.D., 1994

— Brown University - LL.D., 1995

Business

Hewlett-Packard Company
3000 Hanover Street
Palo Alto, CA 94304

— Co-founder and Partner, 1939-1947

— Vice President and Director, 1947-1957

— Executive Vice President and Director,
1957-1964

— President and Director, 1964-1969

— President, Chief Executive Officer and
Director, 1969-1977

— Chairman of Executive Committee,
Chief Executive Officer and Director,
1977-1978

— Chairman of Executive Committee and
Director, 1978-1983

— Vice Chairman, Board of Directors,
1983-1987

— Director Emeritus, Board of Directors,
1987-2001

Director

— Institute of Radio Engineers, (now the
Institute of Electrical and Electronics
Engineers), 1950 -1957 (President 1954)

— FMC Corp., 1965-1974

— Chrysler Corp., 1966-1983

— Overseas Development Council,
1969-1977

— Chase Manhattan Bank, 1969-1980

— Drug Abuse Council, Washington, D.C.,
1972-1974

— Kaiser Foundation Hospital & Health
Plan, 1972-1978

— Utah International Inc., 1974-1985

— University Corporation for Atmospheric
Research Foundation, 1986-1988

— Monterey Bay Aquarium Research
Institute, 1987-1998; Director Emeritus,
1998-2001

Trustee

— Mills College, 1958-1968

— San Francisco Foundation, 1962-1970

— The Rand Corp., 1962-1972

— Stanford University, 1963-1974
(Vice President, 1965-1974)

— California Academy of Sciences,
1963-1968; Honorary Trustee,
1968-2001

— Carnegie Institution of Washington,
1971-1990; Trustee Emeritus,
1990-2001

Activities

- Life Fellow, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), formerly the Institute of Radio Engineers, 1948-2001 (President 1954)
- Palo Alto-Stanford Hospital Center, President of the Board, 1956 -1958; Director, 1958-1962
- AIEE (American Institute of Electrical Engineers) Fellow, 1959
- Honorary Lifetime Member, Instrument Society of America, 1963-2001
- Member, President's General Advisory Committee on Foreign Assistance Programs, Washington, D.C., 1965-1968
- Member, National Academy of Engineering, 1965-2001
- Member, President's Science Advisory Committee, 1966-1969
- Chairman, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 1966 -1994; Chairman Emeritus, 1994-2001
- Member, San Francisco Regional Panel of the Commission on White House Fellows, 1969-1970; Chairman, 1970
- Member, San Francisco Bay Area Council, 1969-1981
- Fellow, American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 1970 -2001
- Member, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, 1971-1972
- Life Fellow Membership, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, 1976 -2001
- Member, National Academy of Sciences, 1977-2001
- Member, Assn. Quadrato della Radio, Bologna, Italy, 1978
- Coordinator, Chapter on Research in Industry, National Academy of Sciences Five-Year Outlook Report, 1980-1981
- Chairman, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Board of Trustees, 1980-1986
- Member, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1981-2001
- Member, National Academy of Sciences Panel on Advanced Technology Competition, 1982-1983
- Member, International Advisory Council, Wells Fargo Bank, 1986 -1992
- Member, Advisory Council on Education and New Technologies, the Technology Center of Silicon Valley, 1987-1988
- Member, National Academy of Sciences, the President's Circle, 1989-2001

- Member, American University of Beirut, International Advisory Council, 1991-2001
- Member, Conservation International, Science Advisory Committee, 1993-2001
- Eminent Member, Eta Kappa Nu Association, 1999

Patents

- Holds thirteen patents on resistance-capacitance oscillators and other electronic devices

Awards

- California Manufacturer of the Year, California Manufacturer's Association, 1969
- Business Statesman of the Year, Harvard Business School of Northern California, 1970
- Medal of Achievement, Western Electronic Manufacturers Association (WEMA), 1971
- Founders Medal, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) (with David Packard), 1973
- Industrialist of the Year (with David Packard), California Museum of Science and Industry and California Museum Foundation, 1973
- Scientific Apparatus Makers Association Award (SAMA) (with David Packard), 1975
- Vermilye Medal (with David Packard), Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, 1976
- Corporate Leadership Award, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1976
- Medal of Honor, City of Boeblingen, Germany, 1977
- Herbert Hoover Medal for Distinguished Service, Stanford University Alumni Association, 1977
- National Medal of Science, the United States' highest scientific honor, U.S. National Science Committee, 1983
- Henry Heald Award, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1984
- Santa Clara County Business Hall of Fame Laureate Award, Junior Achievement, 1987
- World Affairs Council Award, World Affairs Council Of Northern California, 1987
- Degree of Uncommon Man, Stanford University, 1987

Awards (continued)

- Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1987
- National Business Hall of Fame Laureate Award, Junior Achievement, 1988
- John M. Fluke, Sr. Memorial Pioneer Award, Electronics Test magazine, 1990
- Silicon Valley Engineering Hall of Fame, Silicon Valley Engineering Council, 1991
- Alexis de Tocqueville Society Award, United Way of Santa Clara County, 1991
- Exemplary Leader Award, American Leadership Forum, Silicon Valley Chapter, 1992
- National Inventors Hall of Fame Award, National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation, 1992
- Distinguished Citizen Award, Boy Scouts of America, Stanford Area Council, 1992
- Founders Award, National Academy of Engineering, 1993
- Howard Vollum Leadership Award, Oregon Graduate Institute of Science & Technology, 1993
- International Citizens Award, World Forum of Silicon Valley, 1994
- Wall of Fame Honoree, Lowell High School Alumni Association, 1995
- Lifetime Achievement Award (with David Packard), Lemelson-MIT Prize Program, 1995
- Medal of Excellence (with David Packard), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Free University of Brussels), 1995
- Samaritan Award (with David Packard), Samaritan Counseling Center of the Mid-Peninsula, 1995
- Price Waterhouse Information Technology Leadership Award for Lifetime Achievement (with David Packard), Computerworld/Smithsonian, 1995
- Lifetimes of Achievement Award, Senior Coordinating Council of the Palo Alto Area, 1995
- Bay Area Business Hall of Fame Award (with David Packard), Bay Area Council, 1995
- Computer Entrepreneur Award (with David Packard), IEEE Computer Society, 1995
- Information Industry Hall of Fame (with David Packard), INFOMART, 1996
- Honorary Fellowship, Harris-Manchester College, Oxford University, 1996
- Heinz Award, in the category of public policy (with David Packard), Heinz Family Foundation, 1996
- Benjamin Franklin Medal, Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures & Commerce, London, 1997
- Eminent Member, Eta Kappa Nu Association, 1999
- IEEE Third Millennium Medal, 2000
- Engineering Hall of Fame (with David Packard) Electronic Design, 2002



Above
Bill on a fishing trip c.1986.

Below
Bill hosts French President Charles de Gaulle in 1960.



Bill Hewlett was one of the original pioneers of electronics. This quiet, self-effacing man, together with his longtime friend and partner Dave Packard, changed the world and helped usher in the modern technological age.

Despite his extraordinary accomplishments, Bill was known by everyone around him as gracious, charming, humble, unpretentious, and pragmatic. He was driven by a fertile imagination and a curiosity about how things worked.

Bill loved to tinker, loved to chat with HP employees around the world, and touched many lives through his dedication and generosity.

Sign up for updates
hp.com/go/history



Share with colleagues



Rate this document

