



From the Business Section

By Dan Beaulieu

The Monk and The Riddle

The Education of a Silicon Valley Entrepreneur

By Randy Komisar with Kent Lineback

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181 pages

Price \$22.50

Randy Komisar's "office" is the Konditorei coffee bar in Portola Valley, part of Silicon Valley in California. There would be millionaires and billionaires, come to him for advice on how to approach the famous Sand Hill Road venture capitalists. Such is how deals are made in the Valley of overnight millionaires. Writing in the first person, Komisar takes us through the various stages of his personal journey from concert promoter to corporation lawyer dealing in mergers and acquisitions to CEO for several very successful start-ups such as LucasArts, GO Corporation and Crystal Dynamics. He was also one of the founders of Claris Corporation. In short, Mr. Komisar is very rich and very well connected. He now calls himself a "Virtual CEO" and charges huge sums of money, not to mention stock options to help new start-ups get off on the well-capitalized right foot.

The book is more an interesting read than it is a help book. It offers very fascinating insights into the workings of the high technology segment of our booming economic marketplace, Silicon Valley. The valley is a place where business is conducted in coffee bars with VCs dressed in jeans, T-shirts and sandals.

To show us how things in the Valley work, Komisar follows the story of Lenny an east coast would be entrepreneur who wants to launch a business web site he calls "Funerals.com". Lenny hopes to put the "Fun" into funerals and make a fortune in the process. Lenny's idea is to have mourners do their buying via the web, where they can get the best bargains on caskets, liners, burial plots, urns and other bereavement accoutrements. Komisar takes Lenny and his partner Allison under his wing and guides them through the labyrinth of getting investors interested in their new venture. We go along for the ride which is kind of fun.

Finally, Komisar's message to Lenny and Allison is to make certain that "Funerals.com" is their true passion and that they are willing to be involved with this project for the rest of their lives. At one point he chastises Lenny warning him that if he starts this business with only a lucrative IPO in mind, he will fail. First you need the idea, then you need the passion, then you need the commitment and the hard work and if the idea is good and you're very lucky you can someday pull off a successful IPO. Any other way, any less commitment, too much focus on the IPO guarantees failure.

I found this one an interesting diversion from my normal "how to improve" Business fare, I think you will too. Give it a try.

Until next time, see you in the business section

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