Theme
Before Silicon Valley, There was the Hudson Valley
Ascendance in the culture of IBM during the heyday of its founder, TJ Watson

 Prologue
 What follows is a very personal story, a Tale of Two Valleys, within which the author rose up through the post WWII Watson-family culture of IBM, 70 miles up the Hudson river from the Center of the Universe (aka Manhattan), witnessing, and subsequently contributing to, the explosion of today’s digital age that eventually re-surfaced in the South San Francisco Bay. The IBM of my youth, under the leadership of its founder, Thomas J. Watson (aka “TJ”, or “The Old Man”), was the paradigm of an ideal paternalistic, socialistic society within which, if you worked hard, behaved and were loyal, and advanced the value of the company to its investors and customers, you were rewarded with a salary and benefits far beyond any company or union of its time in the mid-20th Century…and for life!
 I surfaced on the planet early the morning of 9 May 1935, the only child of 2st and 3nd generation Irish and Scottish immigrant working class parents…it was a depressing time in the middle of the Great Depression. My parents achieved only an elementary education (8th grade, plus one year high school), yet were quite talented and ambitious. My Mother started work at age 16 in the 1920s as a shorthand stenographer in the local electric utility company (and retired in the late 1970s, having advanced to the position as secretary to the company CEO). She was an outstanding athlete…basketball player, skater, skier, dancer, bowler and baseball player (yes, baseball!). I like to fantasize that my Mom, given the present social/political opportunities available to the XX genotype, would likely today to have become Governor of New York State. My Father was a very talented mechanic/electrician, a pioneer in the 20s and 30s of the Hudson Valley “Ham Radio” movement, later serving as an electronic technician in the US Navy in the Pacific during WWII. Following discharge, he was hired by IBM in 1947 as an instrument service technician on what became the 604 vacuum tube computer project, the first “profitable” mainframe of the digital age. Getting a job at IBM in the Hudson Valley was not easy in the late 40s. In order to obtain county approval to establish the electric typewriter in Poughkeepsie, a strong center of union labor at the time, “TJ” had to agree to not hire anyone in Dutchess County who was already employed unless they quit their current job before applying to IBM. Thus arose several “underground” clubs, wherein young employees right out of high school or college hired by IBM would alert local county workers to emerging job opportunities at the new IBM plant site, following which qualified local Poughkeepsie workers would “quit their jobs” and take the risk of “applying to and getting into IBM.” One such “club” was the Dutchess County Ham Radio group. As an 11-year old in 1946-47, I vividly remember clandestine gatherings in our apartment of Hams’ “colluding” to assess the relative risks of becoming unemployed, and then applying to IBM. My Dad “took the risk,” buoyed by the safety that my Mom had a steady job (and a larger salary!), and he got hired!
 My school “career” in Poughkeepsie/Wappingers was “colorful” to say the least. Apparently, I had a “high IQ” and did quite well in “state tests.” But after my sophomore year in high school, I changed majors to “fast cars, cold beer, and exciting girls,” and my grades plummeted. On graduation, I was unable to get accepted to college, and my Dad directed me to “haul my ass down to the plant (aka IBM) and get a job!” That I did, and what followed was my first journeying in my Dad’s footsteps at IBM, and then in my Mom’s in my second career at the Electric Power Research Institute. Read on! Go to [About\_PMG](http://w2agz.com/About_PMG.htm) on my website [www.w2agz.com](http://www.w2agz.com) now…or…whenever you’re having a boring Sunday.