Silicon Valley, better known as the Santa Clara Valley (or Silicon Gulch by the more vitriolic) is located about forty miles south of San Francisco. It is the undisputed capital of the semiconductor industry in general, and microprocessor manufacture in particular, with other major outposts being located in Massachusetts and Texas. It serves as headquarters for American Micro Systems, Fairchild, Hewlett-Packard, Rolm, Intel, Intersil, Teledyne, Varian, Anderson-Jacobson, Signetics, and Four-Phase... just to name a few. Expanding slightly to cover the San Francisco Bay Area, we can pick up a multitude of other companies of interest to the computer hobbyist, including Godbout Electronics, and Diablo. To put it mildly, much is happening out here. Here are a few about-to-be's:

Call Computer, a super cheap time-sharing service well-known to and well used by the Homebrew Computer Club crowd, has recently installed a direct connection to the Los Angeles area. It is actively supporting the needs of computer hobbyists, soliciting their business, and offering significant assistance. It has contacted the Southern California Computer Society hobbyist group, offering its services to them. Among other things, one service will be to allow Bay Area hobbyists to converse with Los Angeles hobbyists, toll-free, via the computer link. This communications line can support up to six simultaneous 30 CPS (characters per second) bidirectional links, and more links at lower CPS. Their minimum connect time charge is 99 cents per hour (midnight to 6 AM). They offer Hewlett-Packard BASIC, and Data General's ECLIPSE software systems, including BASIC, FORTRAN, ALGOL and assembler languages. (Call Computer, 1961 Old Middlefield Rd, Mountain View CA 94043).

Godbout Electronics, a regular BYTE advertiser, plans announcing a new computer kit for hobbyists built about MSI (medium-scale integrated circuits). It executes the PDP-11 instruction-set and is quite low cost (Godbout Electronics, Box 2355, Oakland Airport CA 94614).

Computer Converser, Inc, a spin-off from Call Computer, plans to announce a TV based terminal for only $595. It is assembled and ready to use, includes a good-quality acoustic coupler, is switch-selectable for 10 or 30 char/sec and full or half duplex operation. It operates with any home TV, displaying twenty six 40 character lines, and can replace a TTY (Teletype Corp. ASR33). In the latter part of January, they expect to begin marketing the acoustic coupler portion of this terminal as a separate item for $95. They are also planning a June announcement of a complete system that will include the above terminal and coupler, plus a microprocessor, plus an 80 character line video monitor, plus BASIC software for around $1200, assembled. Incidentally, the terminal is about the size and weight of a small typewriter, thus easily portable. All of this gear is offered with a full warranty; they are a new and small company and most eager to gain a reputation for good quality and backing their products. (Computer Converser, Inc, 1961 Old Middlefield Rd, Mountain View CA 94043).

New-goodies rumor-mongering is a favorite activity among Silicon Valley engineers and technicians at professional meetings or martini brunches. One rampant rumor is that several chip houses (semiconductor manufacturers) are on the verge of announcing the digital to video chips. Though the details are vague, the general idea is that these chips will be capable of, for instance, accepting binary coded brightness information and horizontal and vertical coordinates for a sequence of points. The chip will then buffer this information, and use it to generate video signal output acceptable to a standard TV. Another rumor is that Intel is working on a simplified controller for their 3000 series, bit sliced microprocessor. The 3000 series is
a sophisticated and powerful chip set, however, partially due to the complexity of the current controller chip organization, it is definitely not for the computer amateur.

Nybble is a term rapidly gaining popularity among digital semiconductor pros, around here. Obviously, a nybble is part of a byte. Back in the early 1960's, IBM introduced byte as the term to specify a portion of a 32 bit word; namely an 8 bit portion. Other manufacturers picked it up, some even using it to refer to a 6 bit portion.

Nybble is becoming popular for referring to those 2 and 4 bit slices.

Who says this is the kook capital of the world? Eccentrics, maybe: Lee Felsenstein, furnishing great assistance and expert advice to Homebrew Computer Club members, heads up LGC Engineering in Berkeley. LGC stands for Loving Grace Cybernetics, of course. Bill Godbout, president of the company with the two computer kits and flashy ads in BYTE, has a PhD in Operations Research. George Morrow, an Associate with Godbout Electronics and project director for their MSL-11 design, is completing his doctorate in mathematics at the University of California in Berkeley. We may have some unusual ways, out here, but we sure turn out some dandy toys.

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You can get hooked on the graphics display card by Jim Hogenson (Oct. BYTE), for example — it is so much fun that this user produced:

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