

# Mark Zuckerberg

## Early Life:

Mark Elliot Zuckerberg was born on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1984 in White Plains, New York, and raised in Dobbs Ferry, New York. His father, Edward Zuckerberg, is a dentist, and his Mother, Karen Zuckerberg, is a psychiatrist. Mark also has three sisters, Randi, Donna and Arielle. Mark always performed well in school, winning prizes in Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics and Classical Studies, as well as attending the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth summer camp.[1]

Mark first started to learn programming by none other than his father, who taught him Atari BASIC programming in the 1990s, when Mark was at the age of ten. When Mark turned eleven he was being privately tutored by software developer David Newman. Newman referred to Mark as a “prodigy”, mentioning that it was “tough to stay ahead of him.”[2] At the age of twelve, he used his knowledge of BASIC to create a messaging program called “Zucknet” which allowed computers between the house and his father’s dental office to communicate with each other. [3] “Zucknet” was considered to be a very primitive version of AOL’s instant messenger, which didn’t come out until the following year. [2]

As well as this clear interest in communication tools, Mark also had an interest in games. Mark recalls, “I had a bunch of friends who were artists. They’d come over, draw stuff, and I’d build a game out of it.” Writer Jose Antonio Vargas sums Mark up very well with, “some kids played computer games, Mark created them.”, basically stating that Mark was an exceptionally gifted child. [4]

## Harvard University:

In 2002, Mark begun his first year in Harvard University, studying Psychology and Computer Science. It should be noted here that Psychology was his major, not Computer Science. Several sources indicate that at this point, Mark had already achieved a “reputation as a programming prodigy” or the go-to software developer on campus.[3][4]

When Mark was in his second year of college, he created a website called ‘Facemash’ which was basically just a ‘hot or not’ game for students at Harvard. Mark scraped ‘internal facebook’ of Harvard houses which were “simple web applications that served up individual students’ names, photos and email addresses freely to logged-in users” for pictures of all the students.[5] The pictures were then placed side by side for students to decide who was hot and who was not. Many people may refer to this as the predecessor of Facebook. What is interesting is that Mark was running a blog at the time, so we can see exactly what he was thinking when writing the software.

*“I'm a little intoxicated, not gonna lie. So what if it's not even 10 pm and it's a Tuesday night? What? The Kirkland dormitory facebook is open on my desktop and some of these people have pretty horrendious facebook pics. I almost want to put some of these faces next to pictures of some farm animals and have people vote on which is more attractive.” - 2:49 pm*

*“Yea, it's on. I'm not exactly sure how the farm animals are going to fit into this whole thing (you can't really ever be sure with farm animals ...), but I like the idea of comparing two people together.” - 11:10 am [6]*

It is interesting here how Mark likes the idea of comparing two people together, hinting at some psychological motivation behind this. Arie Hasit, Marks roommate at the time, recalls the site becoming so popular that it was impossible to surf the Web on Harvard's Internet server. The following day Mark was denied access to the internet by the head of the university. Hasit also recalls that there were “columns in the campus newspaper that argued that what he did was completely improper.”[7] Despite the overwhelming negative reaction to Facemash, there was still an incredible amount of users playing the game, attracting 450 visitors and having 22,000 photo views in just under four hours.[8] It seems as though this game exposed the undeniable want for people to compare other people, and not just strangers, but people they may actually know.

The whole Facemash incident got Mark thinking about a universal online facebook at Harvard, or the lack thereof. On February 9, 2004 the Harvard Crimson published an article on Mark and in it he says “Everyone's been talking a lot about a universal face book within Harvard, I think it's kind of silly that it would take the University a couple of years to get around to it. I can do it better than they can, and I can do it in a week.”[9] There is quite a bit of speculation with how Mark came up with the idea for this Facebook. Perhaps he came up with the idea himself after creating Facesmash, or perhaps he stole the idea from the Winklevoss brothers, who accused Mark of this just six days after the launch of the website and eventually filed a lawsuit against him.[10]

Marks roommate, Dustin Moskovitz recalls the day Mark finished the first version of Facebook, originally called ‘The Facebook’. “When Mark finished the site, we told a couple of friends. And then one of them suggested putting it on the Kirkland House online mailing list, which was, like, three hundred people. And, once they did that, several dozen people joined, and then they were telling people at the other houses. By the end of the night, we were, like, actively watching the registration process. Within twenty-four hours, we had somewhere between twelve hundred and fifteen hundred registrants.”[11]

Originally, access to The Facebook was limited to students at Harvard University and within the first month of launch, more than half the population of students in Harvard University had registered.[12] Inevitably they decided to start expanding. First to Stanford, Columbia, Yale and before long, most universities in the United States and Canada.[12] Mark decided to drop out of Harvard after his second year, June 2004, to work on Facebook full time. By the end of 2004 Facebook had 1 million users[3] and by December 2005, it had 6 million[13]. 2005 is also the year

that the company dropped 'The' from its name and bought the domain name 'facebook.com' for \$200,000.[13]

## **Facebook:**

Facebook is what we all know Mark Zuckerberg for and has had an enormous impact on the world. Facebook continued to expand from exclusively Universities in the US and Canada, to anyone in the world over the age of 13 within the space of a year. [14] In August 26, 2008, Facebook had grown to an incredible 100 million users. In the same year Mark became the world's youngest billionaire at the age of 23, taking the title from Bill Gates, who made his first billion at the age of 31.[15] Since then Facebook has gone on to do amazing things and has literally connected the world. As of June 30, 2017, Facebook has 2.01 billion monthly active users and the average Facebook user is only separated by another user by just 3.57 degrees of separation. [16] For context, the original idea is 'Six degrees of separation' which is the idea that all living things are at a maximum of six steps away from each other, in other words, you should be able to connect any two people in the world with the statement 'a friend of a friend' in a maximum of six steps.[17] After reading some statistics about Facebook it is very clear that it has an unfathomable impact on the world, some good and some bad. It should be noted here that there is a huge connection here between social networking and psychology, Marks major. This is what has made Facebook so successful. People get hooked to it for several psychological reasons such as social validation, fear of missing out, social comparison and a rake of other psychological reasons. That being said there is plenty of good in social networks.

## **Philanthropy:**

Beyond Mark's contributions in the online world, he is also a great philanthropist. The greatest example being the 'Giving Pledge', which he signed with Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and George Lucas. According to the 'Giving Pledge', Mark will donate at least half of his wealth to charity of the course of his lifetime. Other examples include his donation of \$100 million to save the failing Neward Public Schools system.[3] Mark also encourages other to follow in his footsteps by saying, "With a generation of younger folks who have thrived on the success of their companies, there is a big opportunity for many of us to give back earlier in our lifetime and see the impact of our philanthropic efforts."

## **Facebook - Cambridge Analytica Data Scandal:**

With great power comes great responsibility. March 2018 we found out from an ex-Cambridge Anyltica employee, Christopher Wylie, that Cambridge Analytica had scraped personal data from 87 million Facebook profiles without their consent and used this data for political purposes.[18][19] On March 17, 2018, the Observer, Channel 4 news and the New York Times simultaneously published and caused a

huge public outcry. Over the next few days after these publishings, Facebook shares had dropped by \$100 billion, \$16.8 billion of which was Mark's.[20] Huge controversy emerged about the ethical standards for social media companies and privacy in general. People demanded answers from Mark and eventually he testified in front of the United States Congress.[18]