A Biography on Steve Wozniak and his work for the Apple Computer Company.

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Steve Wozniak is perhaps one of the most influential and one of the most important software engineers to have ever programmed. Born on the 11 of August 1950 in San Jose, California, Stephen Gray “Woz” Wozniak would go on to be on the greatest innovators in the personal computer age and one of the forefathers of personal computers with Graphical User Interfaces.

Raised by his mother Margaret Louise Wozniak and his father who was an engineer for the Lockwood Corporation, an Aerospace company founded in 1926, Wozniak graduated from Homestead high School in California in the year 1968. His surname is Ukrainian, and he is of Ukrainian and Polish descent. An interesting anecdote into his life is that credits watching star Trek as a child and attending star Trek conventions as an important inspiration for starting the company we all know and love today with Steve Jobs, Apple inc.

His career got off to a rather interesting start as he was expelled from a university in Colorado for hacking into the school’s computer system and sending prank messages on it. He returned to area of his old high school in Cupertino for university before eventually transferring to the University of California, Berkeley. Wozniak was always a self-learner and in 1971 he designed and built his first computer with a friend of his Bill Fernandez. Named “Cream Soda” the computer served as good prelude to Wozniak’s eventual work on

AppleⅠ and Apple Ⅱ.Fernandez introduced Wozniak to who would become his eventual business partner in Steve Jobs. Jobs was still in high school and a friend of the two was quoted “ you should meet Steve Jobs because he likes electronics, and he also plays pranks”. They became good friends while working together at Hewlett-Packard, now HP.

The Blue boxes are credited in Steve Jobs biography as being so important to the creation of Apple inc. that Jobs quoted himself that without them “there wouldn’t have an Apple”. Wozniak gained interest in the blue boxes after reading an article in October 1971 entitled “Secrets of the Little Blue Box”. The boxes enabled users to make long distance phone calls at no cost whatsoever. This was Jobs and Wozniak’s first business venture together and Jobs handled the sale of the boxes for about 150$ each and split the profit with Wozniak accordingly. Later while Jobs was working at Atari he struck a deal with Wozniak to help with a problem he was working on for Atari. They agreed to split the bonus evenly but it turns out that Jobs misled Wozniak into thinking the bonus was only 700$ when in fact it was around 5000$. 10 years down line, Wozniak found out about the actual sum of the bonus and was dismayed by this as he felt that he would’ve given the money to Jobs if he had needed it anyway.

Steve Wozniak designed Apple’s first products. He began working on the AppleⅠ1975. He tested the first working prototype on the 29th of June that year and was able to display some letters and run a few programs. This was momentous as it was the first time in history that a character was displayed on a TV screen by a home computer. By March 1976, Wozniak had completed the design of then AppleⅠcomputer. He designed the hardware, the circuit boards and the operating system of the computer. Wozniak offered the design to HP several times but they declined and that’s when Jobs suggested that they form their own company to sell printed circuit boards of the AppleⅠ.They raised money to build the first batch by Jobs selling his Volkswagen van and Wozniak selling his HP scientific calculator. So on the April 1st, 1976 formed the Apple Computer Company.

After the formation of the company Jobs and Wozniak made a presentation of the computer to the Homebrew Computer Club and the design impressed Paul Terrell who opening up a computer shop. He asked for the computers to be fully assembled as he was not interested in buying just printed circuit boards. When Jobs and Wozniak finished assembling the first 50 AppleⅠcomputers, they sold them to Terrell for $666.66 dollars per unit. Soon Wozniak resigned from HP to focus all of his attention on Apple. The first computer lacked certain components such a keyboard, a case and a display and these things were essential for consumers. The AppleⅠwas produced about 200 times before Wozniak began working on the next Apple Computer.

The Apple Ⅱwas to be the first personal computer that could display graphics and had the programming language BASIC built into it. Jobs and Wozniak disagreed over how many expansion slots should be included in the computer but eventually went with Wozniak’s idea because he was the main engineer at the end of the day. Wozniak was generally not content with how commercialized Apple’s design process became and cited it as one of the reasons why the Apple Ⅲ failed which was the successor to Apple Ⅱ. He’s quoted saying the Apple Ⅲ “had 100 percent hardware failures”. The Apple Ⅱsuccess managed to carry the company well into the Macintosh era and was the first highly successful mass produced personal computer ever.

Steve Wozniak took a temporary leave of absence in 1981 when a plane he was flying crashed and he was injured. He had several face injuries as well as losing a tooth and suffering from anterograde amnesia, a condition which prevents one from creating new memories, he didn’t remember the crash or anything he did for weeks after that. The accident left him with a different mindset. His passion was computers and he felt that when he returned to Apple that he would try to focus more on engineering rather commercial aspects.

While the first Apple were essential for one of the final projects Wozniak worked at his time at Apple, the project itself, named the Mackintosh, would go on to be his most influential piece of work for decades to come. Wozniak designed the Apple Desktop Bus, a bit-serial peripheral bus owned by Apple which soon became the basis for all Macintosh computers.

Wozniak became annoyed at Jobs’ and Apple’s corporate leadership disregard for the Apple Ⅱ and the designers that worked on bar Wozniak were not even invited the Macintosh introductory event. Wozniak and the Apple Ⅱ essentially made Apple profitable and Wozniak grew frustrated that was not appreciated and in 1985 Steve Wozniak left Apple and sold most of his shares soon after.

The impact Steve Wozniak has had on the world of computing is clear to see. As I type this essay on a MacBook Air, the impact Steve had on the world is still evident today as he helped design the first Apple computers and the Macintosh that is still produced today and is one the highest selling personal computers in the world. The Macintosh has become a symbol for innovation and excellence and I personally put this down to the work Steve Wozniak did.