Elon Musk – From Software Engineer To Rocket Scientist.

Elon Musk was born in June 28 1971 in Pretoria, South Africa. His mother , Maye Musk was a nutritionist or dietrician and a model. His Father . Errol Musk, was a man of many talents most notably a pilot and electromechanical engineer. Elon had 2 younger siblings , his brother Kimbal and his sister Tosca.

As a child Elon recalled to have been scared of the dark , in an interview he explains that he used to be scared of the dark , that is until he reminded himself that darkness was just the absence of photons in the visible spectrum. Elon is also known for being an avid reader at a young age. He would stay in comic book stores and read any and everything he could find until the store would kick him out or close for the day.

Maye would later remark that although Elon didn’t complain to her about it, he was often bullied and or picked on by his peers. She would explain he had the mannerisms of your typical nerd who just didn’t fit in much. Elon attended Waterkloof House Preparatory School and Bryanston High School after which he graduated from Pretoria Boys High School.

After his parents divorce, Elon would choose to stay with his father, a decision which he has publicly called out as a big mistake. He developed a really bitter relationship with his father whom he claimed would not only verbally abuse him but was also a really evil human being. Elon would move to Canada just before his Eighteenth birthday, where he would have to support himself since his family couldn’t. Elon states that after his decision to move which his father vehemently disagreed with, Errol would send him a scathing letter un apologetically voicing his disapproval as well as his belief that Elon would amount to no good in the future and would come crawling back to South Africa.

In Canada, Musk would briefly attend Queens University from which he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania after 2 years. As a college student , he didn’t think much of classes, he would simply read the text books and show up for the tests. This trait of self – teaching or perhaps self- learning would be prevalent throughout his life. At the University of Pennsylvania , he would attain his Bachelor of Science degree and Bachelor of Arts degree. After not being offered any internship spots, Elon dropped out of his Energy physics and material Science Ph.D program at Stanford University just 2 days after enrolment.

He opted to take part in the Internet boom of the 90s by starting his very own startup. A decision with which he made with his brother. Their idea was to digitalize city guides. At first this was thought of as ridiculous as most people couldn’t imagine not using the yellow pages. During this time Elon would do whatever he could to make ends meet ,he would shower in a gym , sleep on the couch etc. He wasn’t in a good place financially and as a result he was especially motivated. He still had his core programming skills intact so he would code the program during the day 7 days a week. This start-up eventually became known as zip2. And not too long after its creation it was redefining the industry by providing content for not only the esteemed New York Times but also the reputable Chicago tribune along with others like Hearst and Knight ridder.

After turning 28 Elon Musk became a millionaire after successfully sold his company Zip2 to Compaq for roughly 300 million U.S Dollars. At the time Elon was ecstatic but was also far from satisfied , he knew there was still a lot more he could do In the world.

Shortly after the Sale Elon began working on ways to innovate transactions in the uprising of the digital age. At the time transactions were notably slow as it relied heavily on the Postal service delivering checks between seller and buyer. This made it common for transactions to take up to weeks to be complete. However this time Elon had a rival , namely Confinity and eBay. To revolutionize the transfer industry he created PayPal with Confinity to better compete against eBay. A while later PayPal had become so successful that it was acquired by eBay to the tune of 1.5 Billion U.S Dollars. At this point in his life Elon was 30 and he could’ve definitely purchased and retired to a chain of leisure islands but according to him this was never an option , he still wanted to do more.

Because Elon grew up in a family that enjoyed sport cars, he developed an affinity for thrilling and beautiful convertibles. Coupled with his desire to accelerate the worlds transition to renewable energy, he began a Company called Tesla which aimed to sell Electric cars that people would want to buy . The first models were aimed at wealthy and or celebrities whom increased public interest in the company. With this publicity as well as revenue from stock sales Elon planned to make affordable versions of the illustrious electric sport cars. However Tesla’s journey was anything but a smooth ride. From the get go people were convinced Musk’s plans were ludicrous and doomed to fail stating that the world is far from being ready for electric cars. Most people who could afford to own stakes in the company declined the opportunity , forcing Musk to fund Tesla with most of his own earnings.

At this point in his life Elon became interested in space , more so than usual. He was fascinated with space travel and its development or lack there of, since Man first landed on the Moon. When asked about how he was able to learn rocket science he replied “ I read a lot of books.” Elon’s plans was relatively simple – as simple as rocket science could be – make advancements to technology for space travel by using “off the shelf” equipment and eventually he hoped for interplanetary travel to be available not in hundred years or so but in his lifetime. This company , titled SpaceX was ultimately granted a loan from the U.S Government as at the start of its life there were many growing pains. As always Elon managed to exceed expectations by paying back the loan as well as interest years before its due date. SpaceX is now on the verge of making Elon the 3rd richest Man in the world behind Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates.

Elon has also co started other companies such as NeuraLink , OpenAI and Solar City, and as of writing this his still working tireless to change the world for the better regardless of how wealth he acquires along the way. His impact in the tech industry has changed countless lives as well as inspired aspiring software engineers such as myself to never settle for less and always strive to do more.