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STEVE JOBS

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Steven Paul Jobs was born on February 24, 1955 in San Francisco. His birth mother, Joanne Schieble and his birth father Abdulfattah "John" Jandali were not married so Jobs was put up for adoption. Paul and Clara Jobs adopted him and raised him as their own although they were always open about the fact he was adopted. Joanne Schieble refused to sign the adoption papers until Paul and Clara signed a pledge they would fund a savings account to pay for Steve's college education.

Steve grew up in Mountain View, a less expensive town just to the south of Palo Alto, the legendary birthplace of Silicon Valley. When Jobs was growing up, David Packard and Bill Hewlett had grown HP to nine thousand employees and lots of other high tech companies were well established including Fairchild Semiconductor and Intel. Jobs's father was into restoring old cars so Steve dabbled a bit in that as well while growing up but he was more passionate about electronics.

Jobs managed to skip a few grades in elementary school because his teachers understood he was intelligent and needed to be challenged. The fact his mother had taught him how to read before he started school also meant he was way ahead of the rest of the kids. As he made the transition to high school, Jobs discovered computers. He saw his first computer while on a tour of Hewlett-Packard's holography lab.

"I saw my first desktop computer there. It was called the 9100A, and it was a glorified calculator but also really the first desktop computer. It was huge, maybe 40 pounds, but it was a beauty of a thing. I fell in love with it."

– Steve Jobs

When he was working on a project and needed some parts, Jobs picked up the phone and called Bill Hewlett's home in Palo Alto. He chatted with Jobs for twenty minutes and not only supplied him the parts he needed but also offered Jobs a job in the H-P plant for the summer. Jobs worked there on the assembly line the summer after his freshman year at Homestead High.

One of the classes at high school was the electronics class taught by John McCollum. He was a former Navy pilot who was a big believer in discipline so naturally Jobs clashed with him almost immediately. While in that class, Steve Jobs became friends with Stephen Wozniak who was a graduate student about five years older than Jobs. Wozniak was a school legend for his wizardry in electronics who still liked to hang around with high school students. Wozniak had taught himself computer programming while working in a part-time job during his senior year and was working in his spare time to design his own home computer. He was a genuine geek and shunned publicity.

"My father told me, 'You always want to be in the middle.' I didn't want to be up with the highest-level people like Steve. My dad was an engineer, and that's what I wanted to be. I was way too shy to ever be a business leader like Steve."

– Stephen Wozniak

One thing Jobs and Wozniak shared was a love of pranks. Jobs was suspended from high school on a number of occasions, more often than not with help from Woz. They built devices which could block broadcast TV signals. They devised a rope and pulley system which raised a huge bed sheet on which was painted a huge hand flipping the middle-finger salute as the school's graduating class marched past the balcony. Probably their proudest achievement, however, was their "Blue Box" which allowed them to make free long distance calls.

"At first, the Blue Box was used for fun and pranks. The most daring of these was when they called the Vatican and Wozniak pretended to be Henry Kissinger wanting to speak to the pope. 'Ve are at de summit meeting in Moscow, and ve need to talk to de pope,' Woz intoned. He was told it was 5:30 a.m. and the pope was sleeping. When he called back, he got a bishop who was supposed to serve as the translator. But they never actually got the pope on the line. 'They realized that Woz wasn't Henry Kissinger,' Jobs recalled. 'We were at a public phone booth.'"

– Walter Isaacson

Wozniak was happy just to build a device that worked but Jobs had an epiphany – they could make these Blue Boxes and sell them for money. Jobs figured each Blue Box had about \$40 of parts so he suggested they sell them for \$150 each. They eventually made almost a hundred Blue Boxes and sold almost all of them. The Blue Box adventure in many ways served as a template for what the pair would later do with Apple.

"If it hadn't been for the Blue Boxes, there wouldn't have been an Apple. I'm 100% sure of that. Woz and I learned how to work together, and we gained the confidence that we could solve technical problems and actually put something into production."

– Steve Jobs

"You cannot believe how much confidence that gave us. It was probably a bad idea selling them, but it gave us a taste of what we could do with my engineering skills and his vision."

– Steve Wozniak

To the relief of everyone at Homestead High, Steve Jobs graduated at the start of summer in 1972 and started thinking about college. He didn't consider going to Berkeley or Stanford because he wanted to do something more artistic and interesting. He instead insisted on applying to Reed College, a private liberal arts school in Portland Oregon which just happened to also be one of the most expensive colleges in the nation. Reed was known for its free-spirited hippie lifestyle, rigorous academic standards and its challenging core curriculum. Jobs arrived on campus in the fall of 1972.

By the time Jobs enrolled at Reed, the student political activism which had accompanied America's involvement in the Vietnam War was winding down. In its place, students were turning to pathways to personal fulfillment with meditation, psychedelic drugs and long talks on spirituality becoming the new staples of student life. Jobs found personal solace in the Zen Buddhism philosophy and became an ardent and obsessive vegetarian.

"Vegetarianism and Zen Buddhism, meditation and spirituality, acid and rock—Jobs rolled together, in an amped-up way, the multiple impulses that were hallmarks of the enlightenment-seeking campus subculture of the era. And even though he barely indulged it at Reed, there was still an undercurrent of electronic geekiness in his soul that would someday combine surprisingly well with the rest of the mix."

– Walter Isaacson

As usual, Jobs became bored with college rather quickly. He liked the idea of being at college but disliked being told what courses he had to take. Instead, he wanted to go just to the ones he was interested in. What was worse, Jobs was starting to feel guilty about spending so much money his parents had saved on an education which seemed like a waste of time – so he came up with his own solution. He would drop out of college so he didn't have to pay tuition and instead just sit in on whatever classes looked interesting.

