

CHAPTER 1

Crazy about electronics

*'When I was a kid, my dad made me believe
that I could build anything.'*

Steve Jobs

Joanne Schieble was an American student, and she was in love with a teaching assistant at her university. His name was Abdulfattah Jandali. The two twenty-three-year-olds had spent a wonderful summer with Abdulfattah's family in Syria, but now they were back in the USA and Joanne was expecting a baby. Joanne's Catholic father was very angry that she was with a Muslim man. And there was more bad news: Joanne's father was dying. She didn't want to marry Abdulfattah and upset her father at this difficult time.

In those days, life was extremely hard for unmarried women with children, so Joanne decided to offer the baby for adoption. She was very clear about one thing: she wanted her baby to go to parents who had studied at university.

Her baby boy was born in San Francisco on February the 24th, 1955. He was adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs, a kind, quiet couple who had hoped for children for ten years. They called the baby Steven.

When Joanne found out that Paul and Clara had both left school at an early age, she refused to sign the adoption papers. But the baby seemed happy with his new parents, and after a few weeks Joanne changed her mind. However, the Jobs had to promise that they would send Steve to university.

Paul and Clara enjoyed being parents. Two years after Steve arrived in their lives, they adopted another child, a baby girl called Patty.

As a young child, Steve was usually awake at four in the morning, and his interest in everything around him often got him into trouble. But Paul Jobs was a calm, patient father. He was also skilled at making things. If furniture was needed for the house, Paul made it in the garage. He invited his son to help. He also gave him a part of the garage where he could make his own things.

Paul Jobs loved to buy and mend old cars as a hobby. Then he sold them for more money than he had spent on them. Steve watched his father work on the cars, but he didn't really want to get his own hands dirty. The cars sometimes needed work on their electronics, however, and this interested Steve much more. He also loved the trips to the junkyard to buy old car parts. His father seemed to know more than the people that worked there, so he always bought the parts for a good price.

The family were now living in Mountain View, a town in the Santa Clara valley. This part of California was famous for all its technology companies. Innovations in electronics and early computing were happening there. In the 1970s people started to call the area Silicon Valley because microchips, an important part of computers, are usually made of silicon.

Many of the Jobs' neighbours were scientists and electronics experts. One of them, Larry Lang, worked at the technology company Hewlett-Packard. He saw that Steve was an intelligent young boy and he taught him how to make radios and other electronic toys.

Home life was very happy for Steve, but at school he was often bored. If he wasn't interested in something, he

refused to do any work on it. He played lots of tricks on the children and teachers, and several times he was sent home early from school.

When Steve was about ten, his school realised that he was very clever. They decided that he should learn with older kids. But this meant a new school in a more dangerous part of town. There were lots of fights at the new school, and Steve had problems with the other children. After a year, he refused to go back. His parents decided to move the family five kilometres down the valley to a town called Cupertino. The schools were better there, and Steve was happier. Most of his friends were older than him and shared his love for maths, science and electronics.

Steve in his high school electronics class.



Steve often went back to Mountain View to visit Mr Lang. At Lang's suggestion, Steve joined the Hewlett-Packard Explorers Club. Different Hewlett-Packard scientists came to the club to talk, and everyone had to build a machine. For Steve's machine, he needed some expensive Hewlett-Packard parts. One night,

twelve-year-old Steve phoned Bill Packard, the CEO* of this huge company, at his home and explained what he wanted. Twenty minutes later, Packard had not only promised to give Steve the parts for free, but also offered him a job for the summer holidays.

The work that summer wasn't very exciting, but Steve loved spending time at Hewlett-Packard. He also worked in an electronics shop called Haltek. Haltek was a junkyard for old and unwanted electronics. Jobs learnt a lot there. He started buying things cheaply at electronics markets in other towns and selling them for more money to his boss at Haltek. His life as an entrepreneur had begun.

Around this time, Steve Jobs first met Steve Wozniak – usually known as Woz to his friends. Woz had been at Steve's school a few years before, and was famous for knowing more about electronics than the electronics teacher. In his free time, Woz was building his own computer with the help of his younger neighbour Bill Fernandez, a school friend of Steve Jobs. When Steve came to see the computer, he and Woz started talking. They both loved electronics and they both loved the music of Bob Dylan. Woz was five years older than Steve, but they were soon close friends.

Steve learned electronics at high school, but he wasn't the star of the class like Woz had been. He began to realise that electronics was not the only exciting thing in life. He discovered a love for the great thinkers and writers of the past, including Shakespeare and Plato. His interest in both science and the arts was unusual. Unlike most people in technology, Steve understood those who had no interest at all in electronics. Later, Apple products were the first choice for creative people like designers and musicians.

* The CEO (Chief Executive Officer) is the head of the company.

At high school Steve also started a relationship with a girl called Chris-Ann Brennan. She was making her own animated film and wasn't interested in anything that the school could teach her. She and Steve agreed on many things and spent a lot of time together.

Steve didn't often go to school, but when he was there he still liked to play tricks on people! With expert electronics help from his new friend Woz, the tricks worked extremely well, and Steve was often in trouble with the teachers.

Then Woz suggested another type of trick. He had read about a machine called a 'blue box'. By making the right noises down the phone lines, a blue box could trick the phone company so you could make free phone calls to anywhere in the world. Steve and Woz decided to make their own blue box. At first, they made changes to the machine that Steve had built when he went to the Explorer Club, but it didn't work very well. Instead, Woz decided to make a digital blue box. When it was finished, he drove to Steve's house to give it a try. It worked!

The blue box



At first they used it to play tricks on people. Woz even phoned the Pope* in Rome, pretending to be an important American politician. But he was told that it was 5.30 a.m. in Italy and the Pope was sleeping. Then Steve suggested a new idea – an idea that later changed their lives. They could make lots of these blue boxes and sell them.

Woz had created the electronics for the blue box, but Steve now wanted a case and other parts for it so that people could use it easily. Steve knew how to get these parts for about \$40 a box. He decided to sell the finished box for \$150.

Woz was studying at Berkeley University so Steve showed some Berkeley students how to use the blue box. Soon everyone wanted one. Steve and Woz sold about a hundred, and started asking \$300 for a box if the buyers looked rich. But then the telephone company found out about their little business and worse followed. Steve showed one of the boxes to a man in a pizza restaurant, and the man asked to buy one. Outside the restaurant, however, he pointed a gun at Steve and stole the box from him. It seemed like a sign. Steve and Woz decided to stop selling the boxes before they got into any serious trouble.

Their adventure with the blue boxes didn't last very long, but it was an important first step into the world of business. They learned how to work together. Woz could create amazing things with electronics. Steve could make Woz's creations easy for people to use, and find people to buy them. They made a great team.

* The Pope is the head of the Catholic Church.