

3. Life with Father

In the 1980s Pretoria, at the age of ten, Elon Musk made the consequential decision to live with his father, Errol, in Johannesburg, leaving behind his mother and siblings. This move, driven by a blend of altruism towards his lonely father and admiration for his grandparent's reasoning, marked a pivotal chapter in his life. Despite the allure of his father's seemingly grand life, complete with luxury cars and a wealth of knowledge and tools, Elon soon realized the gravity of his mistake. The narrative suggests a blend of adventure and hardship, with Elon and his brother, Kimbal, engaging in projects such as building a lodge in the Timbavati Game Reserve which brought them face-to-face with the wilderness.

Elon's childhood was peppered with both wonder and peril. From trips that spanned the United States to the peculiar freedom bestowed upon him and his siblings in Hong Kong, Elon experienced the highs of adventure but also the lows, such as the absence of adult supervision in potentially dangerous settings. Back in South Africa, the dynamic within the extended family provided a rich tapestry of relationships and experiences. Together with his cousins, Elon engaged in ventures that ranged from the mischievous to the perilous, developing a reputation for fearlessness and competitiveness.

Academically, Elon was competent but not exceptional, often criticized for his slow pace and tendency to daydream. His report cards reflected a mix of high achievement in areas of interest like English and Math, juxtaposed with less stellar performance in subjects he found less engaging. After a troubling incident at a public high school, his father enrolled him in Pretoria Boys High School, a change that led to an improvement in his grades, despite continuing challenges in subjects he deemed irrelevant.

Throughout these formative years, Elon's distinctive traits—his inventiveness, curiosity, and resilience—began to emerge. Undertaking projects such as building rockets and mastering magic tricks, he cultivated a blend of scientific curiosity and creative problem-solving. These years, filled with both fond and painful memories, underscored the complexities of his relationship with his father and shaped the trajectory of Elon Musk's life, instilling in him a relentless pursuit of exploration and innovation.