

NIKOLA TESLA

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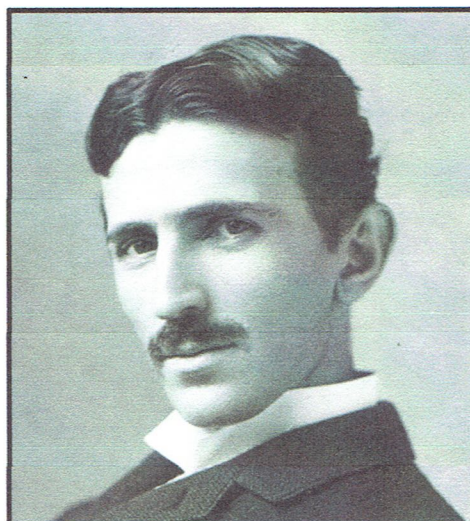
(1) I was pretty much forgotten as any sort of important scientist until the 1990s when interest in my scientific inventions were revived. In my day, I was seen as a bit of an eccentric mad scientist. My biggest contribution to science was the invention of AC (alternating current) for supplying cities and homes with electricity. It is the system that is the most widely used today.

(2) I was born to Serbian parents on July 10th, 1856 in a village called Smiljan which was then a part of the Austrian Empire. I always had a creative and inventive mind as well as an excellent memory, all of which I got from my extraordinarily intelligent mother. In school, I always did well in math. I was able to do many complicated calculus calculations in my head which made teachers suspect I was cheating. Due to my abilities, I was able to graduate high school a year early.

(3) In 1875, I got a scholarship to attend the Austrian Polytechnic in Graz, Austria. My academic career had extreme highs and lows. I went from getting the highest grades in my first year to developing a severe gambling addiction and losing my scholarship in my second year. In my third year, I gambled away all of the money my family had given me to support my studies. I eventually won back the money at the gambling table and repaid them. Unfortunately by exam time, I was completely unprepared and failed to graduate.

(4) At that point, I did something drastic. I cut off all communication with my friends and family. My friends thought I had drowned in the Mur River. I was ashamed and didn't want anyone to know that I had failed to complete my schooling. I began to gamble again but my father found me and begged me to come home. I refused and ended up suffering from a nervous breakdown. Sadly, my father died of a stroke the year after.

(5) In 1884, Thomas Edison hired me to work at his Edison Machine Works company in Manhattan and so I made my first journey to the United States. Thomas Edison was heavily invested in a direct current (DC) system as a way to get electricity from generating stations to households. I was brought in to improve on the very inefficient motors and generators that had been designed for Edison's DC system. Thomas Edison and I didn't get along well and our personalities often clashed. Edison told me



Nikola Tesla
Engineer, Inventor (1856-1943)

that he would pay me \$50 000 if I could solve the problems he had with his DC system. I worked day and night until I came up with solutions. When I asked for payment, Edison said that he had only been joking about paying me that much. I quit right then and there.

(6) Edison had made an enemy of me, but I was not his only enemy. George Westinghouse had also been trying to promote a method of energy generation but one that was different from Edison's. Westinghouse supported an alternating current (AC) system versus Edison's direct current (DC) system. Westinghouse wasn't successful until he met me. By 1887, I had invented a motor that ran on alternating current. Unlike a DC motor, my AC motor was able to transport electricity over long distances and with high voltages. It was also simpler and easier to maintain. I got a patent for my AC system in 1888 and when Westinghouse found out, he convinced me to go into business with him. The "current wars" had begun between Westinghouse-Tesla and Edison. Edison conducted a strong campaign to make AC seem like a dangerous option over DC. Edison even schemed to have the first electric chair be powered by an AC motor, after which he claimed that AC was so dangerous that it was used to kill people in prisons. To counter this, I did several public demonstration in my laboratory where I allowed AC to run through my body without it harming me. Over the next

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11

few years, AC won the war of the currents and Edison had to concede defeat. AC had won the current wars!

(7) In 1891, I was 35 and became an American citizen. I had never stopped inventing and that year I invented and patented the Tesla coil. The coil was a circuit that could produce high frequency AC and would end up being used in many types of electronic equipment, like radios and televisions. My mind constantly raced with new ideas. Unfortunately, in 1895, my laboratory caught fire and hundreds of my models and plans for future inventions were completely destroyed. I was devastated. By the end of my life, I had over 300 patents for different inventions, but I always wondered what more I could have developed if the fire had not taken place.

(8) In 1915, there were rumors that Edison and I were to share a Nobel Prize for our contributions to the development of electricity supplies. Though I was not thrilled to share anything with Edison, I was really disappointed when these rumors proved to be entirely false. The long standing public hostility between Edison and myself might have caused the Nobel Prize Committee to change their minds.

(9) In my later years, my interests turned towards astronomy and interstellar communications with alien beings. I also began to develop what I called a "death ray" which I hoped would be a super weapon that could end war. When I died, the FBI came to confiscate all of my research in hopes of collecting data on the super weapon. I never left behind any clues for them to find.

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