

Tesla Motors co-founder gets auto industry award

By JOSEPH SZCZESNY Of The Oakland Press

The annual executive of the year award in the auto industry will go to an entrepreneur from Silicon Valley. The 2010 Automotive Executive of the Year Innovator Award will be presented to Elon Musk, chairman, product architect and chief executive officer for Tesla Motors, organizers of the award program said Wednesday.

“Elon Musk is a man who came from humble beginnings to accomplish the extraordinary,” said Robert Djurovic, executive director of the Automotive Executive of the Year Award program, and director of automotive services North America, DNV Business Assurance.

The Automotive Executive of the Year Award nominating committee includes industry media, analysts and automotive supplier CEOs.

Based in California’s Silicon Valley, Tesla Motors is the only automaker selling electric vehicles that are both highway-capable cars and in serial production. Tesla also has been credited with pushing the entire automotive industry toward electric vehicles.

Musk co-founded Tesla and continues to oversee the company’s product strategy — including the design, engineering and manufacturing of more affordable electric vehicles for mainstream consumers.

He has been interested in electric vehicles for two decades. He planned to do graduate studies at Stanford University in materials science and applied physics but put school on hold to start Internet companies Zip2 and PayPal. In addition to his Tesla duties, he serves as CEO and chief technical officer of SpaceX, and he is chairman of SolarCity.

Since 1964, the Automotive Executive of the Year Award has recognized excellence in industry leadership. Past recipients such as Carroll Shelby William Clay Ford Jr., Dieter Zetsche, Henry Ford II, Bob Lutz, Nobuhiko Kawamoto, Carlos Ghosn and Lee Iacocca.