

## ELECTRIC WOOD

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(1) I guess you might say I was a curious child. Magic, science, and "mad scientists" caught my attention and amazed me almost as easily as the fireworks on the Fourth of July did. I was curious, and if curiosity killed the cat, then I guess you could say I was lucky to be alive.

(2) When I was four years old, Tinkertoys, Lincoln Logs, and other building supplies were not only enough to build me a world, they also kept me out of my mother's hair for hours. I was always building and creating, led not by teachers or mere physical laws but solely by my imagination; I knew no bounds or limits. However, there was one place outside my own world of Tinkertoys that I always envied: Dad's Workbench. Located as it was in our dark, deep, and damp basement, I couldn't help but perceive it as mysterious. Grand, tall, long, and strong, this workbench was nothing like the stupid Fisher Price thing that I had gotten one year earlier. It had real steel tools and nails on it--and, no sir, no cheap, plastic pliers there!

(3) Dad seemed always to be there, working relentlessly on a multitude of projects. He was a master with wood, nails and wires, and I loved to watch him work. If I was lucky, I could help him hold wood together and even bang in a few nails sometimes. But at other times, no doubt when the project was of great importance or very dangerous, I would have to be content to watch him or tinker on my own.

(4) It was on one such occasion that I credit myself with one of my first inventions--possibly my greatest--"Electric Wood." To keep me occupied, my father had given me a scrap piece of a two-by-four. I was thrilled. Here was the chance I was looking for; I could prove to him that I was a great inventor also. So I took the wood, some nails and a hammer and diligently went to work.

(5) One or two minutes later I was finished (you can't do that much with one piece of wood!); my masterpiece was done! Exactly in the middle of the wood were two upright nails hammered in perfectly straight. To top it off--and I was proudest of this--I had tied the loose copper wires of one end of an old extension cord around each of the nails in the board. The other end, intact, was just waiting to be plugged into the wall socket. My invention was ready to be tested.

(6) Just as I was ready to plug it in, Pop turned around and asked me to show him what I had done. Like a loving parent, he complimented me on my hard work but told me that under no circumstances was I to touch the socket. Without rebuttal I said I wouldn't, and he went confidently back to his work.

(7) There I stood, my glory stripped from me. In one hand was the cord connected to my beautiful invention, and just inches away from the other hand, the wall socket waiting for me to insert the plug. "It's such a pity," I must have thought. "Now no one can possibly see how awesome this invention really is."

(8) Then, looking at Dad, I realized he couldn't see what I was doing; he was too busy working on something else. Filled with determination to prove my invention for the betterment of mankind, I pushed the plug into the socket . . . .

(9) "Poof!" A big blue spark jumped from my wood block, and suddenly everything went dark. I sat for what seemed like hours in the dark, then I began to cry. I don't know whether I was more afraid or more frustrated, but I did realize that my great invention, "Electric Wood," had failed.

(10) Then, out of the darkness, I heard Dad calling my name. I was glad to hear his voice; but I knew, too, that I would have to wait for another day to pursue my inventions on that workbench again.