

Bathroom Science

Few people in the world have the scientific mind of an Andrew Stevenson. Inspired at an early age by the works of the great Dr. Frankenstein, Andrew's scientific aspirations loomed huge. While most kids his age are tinkering with the most basic and elementary of scientific experiments, Andrew is thinking outside the box. While other kids his age are changing the color of water by adding food coloring, Andrew is taking the principles of quantum physics and organic chemistry and weaving them into a tapestry of new discoveries and inventions incomprehensible to most men. Andrew's mind is a flurry of unfathomable questions and a reservoir of brilliant answers. For Andrew the challenge is not simply remembering the various steps of the scientific method, but thinking through his mind as many as 50 to 75 experiments at one time.

Perhaps I can share with you a little known fact that might provide some insight into the depth and magnitude of this young boy's genius. One weekend Michael was up to the house in Huntsville. He had brought with him his study materials for the MCAT test. Frustrated and depressed with the difficulty of the practice exams, Michael went to bed. Meanwhile, Andrew lay awake in his bed thinking through an experiment that could very well be the cure for cancer. Unable to sleep he went upstairs for a glass of milk and some of mother's fantastic chocolate chip cookies. Sitting at the table he decided to take a practice exam. When I got up to jog and exercise I discovered Andrew asleep at the kitchen table. As he slept I graded his test. Not only did he score 100% on the exam, but also he identified two problems that he thought were incorrectly stated in the exam book. In the margin of the book he wrote, "Oh the incompetence of man. For when they think they are wise they are really fools".

I gently woke up the boy scientist. Not quite coherent he was muttering the third law of thermal dynamics. "Andrew, Andrew my son", I said gently, "Wake up. I need to talk to you". Andrew fully opened his eyes, "Father, placating my internal inertia and quest for intelligence is no compensation for dialogue with those of who fall the agues of parental responsibility". Not understanding a word of what he said, I simply replied, "Andrew we need to rap". "Sure, dad, no problem", came the boy genius response.

"Andrew you are not like other children. You are different, but different in a good kind of way. You see, you are very, very smart. You have mental capabilities greater than most adults do – and then only a very few, select adults. These people have IQ's over 170. Your IQ has been determined by the best specialists in the country to be over 283. Now, with that type of intelligence there comes a responsibility to use your gift for good, to improve the lives of those around you. From now on I want you to think only about inventions or discoveries that will greatly benefit man." Andrew looked up at me. There was sense of solemnity about him that I had never seen before. "Dad I will go and I will do only those things I know will help my fellow men."

I felt good about things. Young Andrew thought differently from that time forward. Now his thoughts were centered on helping those around him. His parents felt good that his experiments shifted from pyrotechnics to development of useful household goods.

Andrew invented the “garbage disposal bomb” to help eliminate bothersome odors in the kitchen. He developed general-purpose cleaners that were easily ten times more effective than store bought cleaners. He invented an air filtration system built into the size of a matchbook and that plugged into a regular electrical outlet. He was great and the family was happy.

That is, until Amanda’s friend, Erin came to visit our home in Colorado. Andrew was soaking in the tub. The water was comfortably warm. As he lay there enjoying the modern day miracle of a little water and bath soap, his ingenious mind began to churn. He picked up the shampoo bottle and began to examine the ingredients on the back label. “Sodium Laurel Sulfate?”, he exclaimed, “Why in the world would they use a synthetic humectant to lower the ph level of a shampoo?” This is the problem with most manufacturers today. He began to analyze the problem at hand. Their shampoos do not have sufficient levels of acidity to strip the oils and man-made chemicals from hair.

As he laid there the warmth of the water he began to feel a very natural urge. He began to...well, you know, want to go “number one”. Most normal boys would leave the tub when this urge occurs and takes care of business in the usual fashion. But not Andrew. “Eureka”, he yelled. “I have a great idea.” He removed the cap from the bottle and emptied two thirds of the contents into the tub. Now came the challenge of accurately supplementing the remaining shampoo with enough acidic liquid to create the ultimate shampoo. As most people know, the end result of an experiment is an unequivocal testament to the genius of a scientist.

Andrew held the bottle up to the light. “Ah, finally a shampoo that will be the bathroom staple of every women in America.” But Andrew knew the real of the effectiveness of a product is the actual product in the hands of the consumer. Andrew quickly drained the tub and removed all other shampoo products from the bathroom. He set the clear bottle of yellow – green shampoo in the corner of the tub. Erin was next in line to take a shower. She had beautiful, long, black hair; the kind that needs lots and lots of shampoo.

One could hear Erin singing in the shower. She was a delightful young lady and a very good friend of Amanda. Amanda had taken every step to insure that this would be a fun and memorable trip for her dear friend. However, Amanda became a little concerned when the singing from the bathroom turned to expressions of, “Oooh, whooa, what? What kind of...”. This went on for several minutes. Amanda inquired, “Everything okay in there, Erin”? Erin politely replied, “Sure. No problems. Everything is just fine”. She ran her fingers through her hair and it did not feel right. And the odor.... the odor was foul. The shampoo was absolutely putrid. Erin was feeling physically ill.

Meanwhile Andrew was creating new names for his unique and novel hair care product. “You’re in Love” was too long. “Au Natural” was too common. “Country Peas” did not have broad appeal. “Toilet Topical de Pelo” was a different language and no one would understand. “How difficult” he thought, “I can come up with the world’s greatest shampoo in just a few minutes and then stubble all over the place when it comes to just finding a simple little name everyone would like!”