

HISTORY AUDIO-DATEI

Serendipity

... mehr in der **PRINTAUSGABE:**

FEATURE Englische Artikel mit Vokabelhilfe

TECHNOLOGY Fachwissen auf Englisch

LANGUAGE Vokabel- und Grammatikübungen

WELTWEIT Interkulturelle Kommunikation

RUBRIKEN Neues aus Technik und Business

... mehr unter www.engine-magazin.de

Serendipity

Viele bekannte Erfindungen wie Teflon oder die Mikrowelle entstanden durch Zufall. Dennoch brauch es einen wachen Geist, diese Zufälle auch zu erkennen und zum fertigen Produkt weiter zu entwickeln

Thomas Edison, one of the great *inventors* of all time, once said, "*Genius* is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent *perspiration*." But he failed to *mention* another vital element of the inventive mind: *observation*.

Great ideas don't spring from empty grey matter. We need to read and learn; to experience. The inventive mind is *fertile* ground, but *seeds* must be planted if anything's to *burst forth*.

Then there's the *flip side* of observation. It's not just *grist for the mill*. It also helps us recognize invention when we happen to *stumble upon* it. A surprising number of inventions were *accidental* – the result of looking for one thing but finding another.

In 1938, Du Pont chemist Roy Plunkett was working to create an alternative to the *refrigerant* Freon. He stored Freon gas for his experiments in canisters that contained iron. Returning to his lab one morning, he discovered the gas and iron had reacted to form a white, *flaky*, very *slippery* powder. Rather than throw it out, he studied it. We now know it as the non-stick *coating* Teflon.

Artificial sweeteners have a rich history of *serendipitous discovery*. It's not entirely surprising. If a researcher *inadvertently* tastes something sweet – that's safe and low-calorie, too – it's going to get attention. Saccharin was discovered from research on coal *tar* when Ira Remsen failed to wash his hands before dinner. Aspartame, the sweetener in Equal and Nutrasweet, was uncovered while searching for an anti-*ulcer drug*.

In 1952, a time when very few women could be found in *corporate* research labs, Patsy Sherman was working on a new kind of rubber for the fuel lines in jet aircraft. Her lab assistant dropped a bottle of an experimental *compound* on his *canvas sneaker*. It wouldn't wash off. And over the *ensuing* weeks they discovered the sneaker didn't get dirty. The result? Scotchgard *fabric protector*.

Percy Spencer was working with radar equipment for a defence *contractor* when he discovered that the peanut chocolate *bar* in his pocket was melting. His observation led to the invention of the microwave oven. Researchers in England were studying a new drug for the treat-

	<i>illness</i>
<i>developers</i>	
<i>sweat</i>	<i>prefers</i>
<i>bring up</i>	
<i>*see list</i>	
<i>fruitful</i>	
<i>*see list ... split open</i>	
<i>other side</i>	
<i>*see list</i>	
<i>trip over</i>	
<i>unexpected</i>	
<i>coolant</i>	
<i>*see list</i>	
<i>*see list</i>	
<i>covering</i>	
<i>Synthetic *see list</i>	
<i>coincidental finding</i>	
<i>unintentionally</i>	
<i>*see list</i>	
<i>carbuncle medicine</i>	
<i>enterprise</i>	
<i>mixture</i>	
<i>textile sports shoe</i>	
<i>following</i>	
<i>textile</i>	
<i>supplier</i>	
<i>block</i>	

ment of heart *disease*. It didn't work. But it had a very noticeable side effect on men. Voila! Viagra.

Penicillin. Rogaine. Superglue. Safety glass. Plastic wrap. Silly Putty. Some life-saving; some just fun. We found them when we weren't looking. Lucky? Yes. Just lucky? Absolutely not. For as Louis Pasteur once observed, "In the field of observation, chance *favours* the prepared mind." ■ *Andy Boyd*

Dieser Text ist Teil der Radioserie „Engines of Our Ingenuity“ und wird hier mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Autors und der Radiostation KUHF wiedergegeben. Den Originaltext und weitere 2400 Kurzberichte über die Geschichte der Technik finden Sie unter www.uh.edu/engines

<i>accidental</i>	<i>zufällig, unabsichtlich</i>
<i>artificial</i>	<i>künstlich</i>
<i>bar</i>	<i>hier: Riegel</i>
<i>burst forth, to</i>	<i>aufbrechen, aufplatzen</i>
<i>canvas</i>	<i>Segeltuch</i>
<i>coating</i>	<i>Beschichtung</i>
<i>compound</i>	<i>Mischung, Masse, Präparat</i>
<i>contractor</i>	<i>Unternehmer, Anbieter</i>
<i>corporate</i>	<i>Unternehmens-</i>
<i>discovery</i>	<i>Entdeckung</i>
<i>disease</i>	<i>Krankheit, Erkrankung</i>
<i>drug</i>	<i>Medikament</i>
<i>ensue, to</i>	<i>folgen</i>
<i>fabric</i>	<i>Gewebe</i>
<i>favour, to</i>	<i>begünstigen, bevorzugen</i>
<i>fertile</i>	<i>fruchtbar</i>
<i>flaky</i>	<i>flockig</i>
<i>flip side</i>	<i>Kehrseite</i>
<i>grist for the mill</i>	<i>Wasser (wörtl.: Mahlgut) auf die Mühle</i>
<i>inadvertently</i>	<i>versehentlich, unabsichtlich</i>
<i>inventor</i>	<i>Erfinder</i>
<i>mention, to</i>	<i>erwähnen</i>
<i>observation</i>	<i>Beobachtung</i>
<i>perspiration</i>	<i>Schweiß, Transpiration</i>
<i>refrigerant</i>	<i>Kühlmittel</i>
<i>seed</i>	<i>Saat, Samen</i>
<i>serendipitous</i>	<i>glücklich</i>
<i>serendipity</i>	<i>glücklicher Zufall</i>
<i>slippery</i>	<i>glatt, glitschig</i>
<i>sneaker</i>	<i>Turnschuh</i>
<i>stumble upon, to</i>	<i>darüber stolpern</i>
<i>sweetener</i>	<i>Süßstoff</i>
<i>tar</i>	<i>Teer</i>
<i>ulcer</i>	<i>Geschwür</i>