

SHELL SHOCKED

The Tommy and Hank Show

By Art Stevens

Once upon a time two longtime friends lived in these parts. Each of the two was brilliant and achieved extraordinary things in life. The two achieved so much that they became very wealthy and accumulated more money than most Americans.

What the two men also had in common was that they wanted to live near each other so that they could boast to each about their individual exploits. Their friendship was based somewhat on their ability to engage in one upsmanship. Their conversations over expensive French wine was classic "I can do anything better than you can" jibes at each other.

They called each other Tommy and Hank but to the rest of the world they were known as Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. And they built huge estates in Fort Myers which have become landmarks for the area. Every conversation they had was predicated on one trying to outdo the other. Their conversations typically went something like this:

Tommy: I invented the light bulb today. What have you done lately?

Hank: What the hell is a light bulb? Is it something you plant in the ground that sprouts vegetables?

Tommy: No, moron, you plug it into a wall and it lights up the room.

Hank: Well, I have no trouble lighting up a room. Just give me two more glasses of that wonderful wine and you'll get so much light in a room that you'll have to wear those silly sun glasses, which I regret to say you didn't invent.

Tommy: Hank, one day you'll see the benefit of my light bulb. You won't need to use those kerosene lamps any more indoors. I remember the time you almost burnt your house down when you

put vinegar into that lamp instead of kerosene. You really ought to see a doctor about your color blindness.

Hank: Color blindness, indeed. Well, my color blindness didn't stop me from inventing the Model A Ford. This device will make the horse and buggy obsolete. You won't need horse power to get from point A to point B. Hmmm, I like that term "horse power". Maybe I can borrow it to educate people on how many horses it would take to equal the power of my Model A.

Tommy: Horse power? To you I say horse manure. That's what your worthless invention will add up to. Who would ever want to travel anywhere in a horseless carriage? We've been using horses for transportation for centuries. Take my advice and try to invent something that flies in the air.

Hank: Well, I certainly think that a horseless carriage makes a great deal more sense than a light bulb. How do you fire up a light bulb anyway? What keeps it lit?

Tommy: Electricity, that's what.

Hank: Electricity? What in the world is that? Tommy, you've been drinking too much of that wine. It's affected your mind.

Tommy: Electricity is the power of the future. It's much more important than your silly horseless carriage. Electricity will not only enable people to have another form of indoor light but it will also enable them to do such other things as cook food better, heat their homes and keep their food fresh.

Hank: Tommy, this is a pie in the sky scheme. You need to be practical. Why don't you just stick to your silly light bulb. You've got enough on your plate as it is. Please pour me another glass of that fabulous wine.

Tommy: There's never enough on my plate. I have a whole list of things to invent. I want to change the world for the better. My inventions are far more important than your silly horseless carriage. You should do something more useful, like invent a bigger and more powerful horse.

Hank: Tommy, my dear friend, I guess only history will be the judge of which of our inventions is more important. But I can assure you that if we meet here in your home ten years from now you will find that I will have been selected by the stewards of accomplishment as the greater contributor to modern civilization than you. I am so confident about this that I will wager a bet with you. I'll bet you that my next invention, the horseless horse will enshrine me as America's greatest inventor.

Tommy: Not so fast, my moron friend. My next invention will take American civilization into the stratosphere. I am very confident that my name will be remembered long after yours.

Hank: All right, idiot child, what is your next invention and why is it so remarkable?

Tommy: My next invention is a phonograph record that will allow us to hear voices and sounds.

Hank: (chuckling) Tommy, Tommy, Tommy. You certainly are a world changer, aren't you? A phonograph record? And what will it be made from?

Tommy: I'm still working on it. At the moment I'm experimenting with hardened horse manure. More wine?

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