



The first book that I bought was *The Boy Electrician*. During fourth grade, three of us would ride our bikes a mile to the public library, check out our limit and pedal home with books bouncing around in our wire cage baskets. I checked out *The Boy Electrician* so many times. I wanted my own copy. It cost \$3.50 and came by mail.

I was enthralled with the things I could create and the masterful and yet simple manner in which some of the great inventions had been created. The telegraph, the electric motor, the wireless receiver, the radio and the telephone could all be made if I had patience and worked carefully. The materials were easily accessible. The end results were exciting. The book spoke to my curiosity.

I built several of these great inventions. Some on my own. Some with my brother Jim and good friend David. Using a piece of wood, a double edged razor blade, a pencil lead and some wire, I made a radio receiver that really worked. From my ten year old perspective there were no limits to what could be accomplished.

My parents believed in reading. The curiosity and positive can do attitude fostered was reinforced in a very hands on way by *The Boy Electrician*. I became a full fledged nerd with black glasses and a chemistry lab in the basement. As I look back at my early years and know what many young people struggle with today, I believe that I lived a truly wonderful childhood.

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A little warning.... Books are dangerous. Inspiring. Thought provoking. Powerful. Books are medicine for the soul. I enjoy becoming the characters and reading books from start to finish straight through often without much of a break. Sometimes you pick them and sometimes they select you. I find books are quite unlike videos or TV in that to bring them to life, you must participate in them with your imagination. The thoughts and emotions stay with you long after TV images fade.

I did not follow through in a scientific career, but I hold on to the curiosity and wonder of nature and how things work. I work to build on the positive attitude that creating things with one's hands provides. I still have *The Boy Electrician* and most of its dust jacket on a shelf in my office at home.

William Richards

