

Turx

Inverted Inventors

*People who didn't realize
their own inventions
would kill them*

So, as I'm sure you already know, Apple CEO Steve Jobs died a few months ago from cancer at the age of 56. Now, did his cancer have anything to do with the fact that he had always surrounded himself with devices like iPhones, iPods and iPads? Probably not. But if one of those somehow did have a hand in his death it wouldn't be the first time someone got killed by his own invention.

The colorful characters in this article all have one thing in common. They all accidentally committed murder against themselves. And in most cases, they never found out about it until the last second.

You know all those murder stories where "the butler did



it”? Well, in all of these following stories, the victim himself is that proverbial “butler.”

Welcome to the world of inventions gone wrong. Doing or creating something that has never been done or created before very often requires a certain leap into the abyss. The reality is that sometimes those who make the leap never return. And to add a final nail to their collective coffins, not only did they get a patent for their creation, some of them even got exclusive naming rights to their method of death.

It is interesting to note that in most cases it was arrogance, anger or greed that caused the unfortunate demise of some clearly brilliant minds. Alternatively, some inventors were just hardworking people who sought to provide for the family. And most ironic of all are those people who died while testing out new methods intended to save the lives of others...

Franz Reichelt The flying tailor

Year: 1912

Franz Reichelt was many things. He was a tailor, inventor and somewhat of an adventurer. Luckily for Franz, he was living at the turn of the 20th century, when inventors and adventurers were in high demand. Even tailors were sort of useful, and he got along just fine. That is, until he made the fatal mistake of combining all three of his hobbies.

Like many budding inventors of his time, he was fascinated by aviation and sought to add his name to the growing list of airborne innovators. He designed an odd looking suit, which would casually open as a parachute as soon as the wearer leaped from an airplane or building.

At least that was the idea.

Although his invention would have probably destroyed the fashion industry, it could have made for much more strategic wars and cooler police chases. So it was with tremendous fanfare and excitement when

Franz announced that he would be testing his parachute on a human-sized dummy off the Eiffel Tower. Everything was set and the onlookers were excited.

Ok, so how did he die?

Not long before the experiment, Reichelt had a change of heart. No, he still wanted to test his new parachute, but instead of using a mannequin he decided to volunteer himself for the job.

This decision came as a great shock to his relatives and friends. Of course, this was also against the law in France, but Reichelt had made up his mind.

Refusing a rope or any other safety device, he explained to his worried friends, “I want to try the experiment myself, and without trickery, as I intend to prove the worth of my invention. You are going to see how my 72 kilos and my parachute will give your arguments the most decisive of denials.”

As Franz ascended to the first stage of the tower wearing his “suit,” his intentions became obvious and a police guard blocked his path. But that wasn’t going to stop a man trying to prove the worth of his invention!

With the help of friends, he made it past the guard, and by 8:22 AM he was facing an



Franz Reichelt in his parachute outfit.



At the peak of the Eiffel Tower.



Just before his landing/death.

eager gathering of journalists and onlookers. His friends tried convincing him at the last moment to use a mannequin, but to no avail. Franz readjusted his apparatus, checked the wind direction, smiled to his friends one last time, and then made the 187 foot plunge... to his immediate death.

With that, he successfully proved the old maxim: One small step for man; one giant leap for idiocy.

Lesson for the Future: Yeah, we all hate the inconveniences imposed by bureaucratic regulations, but seriously, there is no use being a wise guy.

Dishonorable Mention

Jean Rozier (Metz, France, 1785) died in a Rozière Balloon (named after himself, of course), which was powered by a combination of helium and hot air. Rozier’s

dream had always been to cross the English Channel. Regrettably, his dreams crashed along with him and his assistant from an altitude of 1,500 feet.

William Bullock Killed by his own anger

Year: 1876

Bullock’s story is different than Reichelt’s, since Bullock was actually an accomplished inventor who had acquired many patents for various mechanical inventions. Another difference is that Bullock did not die with his “foot in his mouth.” Though his death did involve his foot.

Ok, so how did he die?

While toying around with one particular machine called the “web rotary press,” one of the pedals seems to have malfunctioned. A frustrated Bullock tried kicking a troublesome driving belt into place, causing his foot to get crushed in the moving mechanism.

Unfortunately for him, his foot got infected at a time in history when the solution to everything was a little bloodletting, amputation and some strong alcohol. To the shock of absolutely no one, he



Inventor William Bullock.