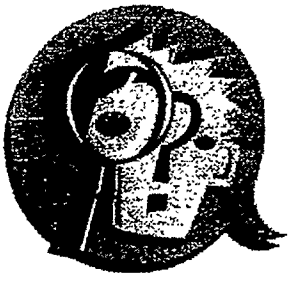
PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT
UC-5294

Ask Yahoo!

Monday, October 2, 2000

Ask a Question



Previous Question
Why are a pair of aces and a pair of eights sometimes called a "Dead Man's Hand"?

Next Question
How do you clean copper?

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Preview it.

Related Questions

- Who in the world invented Velcro?

Dear Yahoo!

What is Bakelite? It was used in the '20s and '30s to make art deco items.

David
Houston. Texas

Dear David:

A Yahoo! search on "Bakelite," followed by a click on the Web Pages link led us past an intriguing assortment of sites selling Bakelite radios, telephones, snowglobes, jewelry, and decorative goods to pages describing the history of this revolutionary early plastic.

Bakelite, the brandname of a versatile, heat-resistant resin called *polyoxybenzylmethylenglycolanhydride*, is produced by combining carbolic acid (or coal tar or phenol, depending on whose account we read) and formaldehyde. Like many other fortuitous inventions, it was created accidently, then refined by Belgian-born U.S. chemist **Leo Baekeland**, (1863-1944), who was working to develop a fire-resistant, synthetic shellac.

In the first decade of the 20th century, shellac was produced in limited quantities from the resinous secretions of Asian beetles. Shellac was an effective electrical insulator, and the electrification industry was beginning to boom. Baekeland saw an opportunity; a previous successful invention provided his financing.

In 1899, the entrepreneurial Dr. Baekeland sold his rights to *Velox*, a commercial-grade photographic paper, to George Eastman (of Eastman Kodak), for the gigantic sum of one million dollars. He set up an independent laboratory at his Yonkers, New York, estate to pursue plastics research.

For several years, Baekeland and his associates applied varying degrees of heat and pressure to resinous gunk. Using a heavy iron "bakelizer" (a hybrid vessel part pressure-cooker, part industrial-strength boiler), Baekeland was able to control and refine the process till he produced "electrically resistant, chemically stable, heat-resistant, shatter-proof" bakelite.

In 1907 he filed patent papers, and in 1909 he presented the world's first entirely synthetic plastic to the American Chemical Society. The rest is **plastics history**.

Andy Warhol loved Bakelite. When he died in 1987, his collection fetched record prices at Sotheby's. Collectors today can find an abundance of Bakelite, from bangles to radios, on Yahoo! Auctions.

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