

7. Lighter Than Air

Ted's mother wanted Ted to be another Einstein. However, Ted realized that Einstein made brilliant discoveries that changed the world, but he never amassed a personal fortune. So Ted's role model was not Einstein, but Thomas Edison, who not only invented the light bulb (and, more generally, the practical use of electricity) but who also made a fortune by starting companies that sold electricity to power all those light bulbs. He made a lot more money selling the electricity than he did selling the light bulbs.

Similarly, Ted's interest in lighter-than-air products was to create a market for helium, of which he had bought up the world's entire supply. Admittedly, boobs were the original motivation for the whole enterprise. Ted noticed that famous actresses and models from the 1950's and 1960's (that is, before the silicone implant era) did not really have enormous boobs. Most famous sets of gigantic boobs are more recent and have probably been surgically enhanced. However, while the silicone implant did succeed in creating some truly impressive chests, it had two major disadvantages. First, silicone has weight, and weight causes sagging. Second, though this is still somewhat controversial, silicone leaking out of the implants may cause serious health issues. It certainly caused serious financial issues for the firms that sold the implants. Ted realized that *helium* implants would avoid these problems. Helium has negative weight (relative to air), so it actually fights sagging. Of course, if the implants were overinflated, there might be the opposite problem, fly-away boobs, but Ted thought he could manage that with appropriate lingerie. Equally importantly, if the helium implants leaked, there would be

no health issues. The woman would simply talk funny (like Donald Duck) for a few minutes.

Ted considered that hydrogen is even more buoyant than helium. However, anyone who has ever seen the old video clip of the crash of the Hindenburg would realize why hydrogen implants would be a very bad idea.

Ted's helium implants were an immediate success, but there was still the basic problem that not all women, or even most women, are willing to have surgery just to make their boobs bigger. This line of thought, as well as Kristin's request for help with her heading-south bustline, led quickly to the invention of the helium bra. It had all of the advantages of the normal push-up bra, with the additional benefit of buoyancy from the helium. Furthermore, by adding a valve to the bra, the amount of helium inside could be increased or decreased at any time of the day or night. A woman could, for example, go to work with normal size breasts, and then go to the bar after work with tremendous knockers. An additional eye-catching option was to mount the valve on the front of the bra, in the shape of an erect nipple. This valve would be removable, again so that its spectacular effects would be evident only when appropriate.

Kristin was more than happy to wear Ted's helium bras, but she drew the line at the continuously adjustable version. In her opinion, once you made your boobs big enough for people notice, it would be too evident and strange if they changed size repeatedly. Also, because her mother had taught her that ladies do not show nipple, she vehemently rejected the bras with the front-placed valves. Piotr, who was smart enough to know that what matters is what you see and what you get when the clothes are *off*,

agreed, and so Ted was left largely without a market in his own household. So he simply used Kristin as a test model, and she wore his free samples, without the visible valves.

Ted's concern for the wants and needs of women naturally made his bras big sellers. However, as he had predicted, his patents for the bras were quickly infringed. It was at this point that Ted's genius was fully revealed. Although anyone could make a helium bra, it was of no use without helium, and they had to buy that from Ted. A few people did try to market hydrogen bras, with some predictably disastrous results. Similarly the hot-air bra was tried but never really became practical, because the hot air cooled too quickly, and a small burner to insert inside the bra to keep the air hot turned out to be devilishly difficult to manufacture and very expensive. Also there were some nasty incidents of first-degree or even second-degree burns to the chest. The manufacturers may have said, "Do not use without an asbestos t-shirt," but it was not reasonable to think that most women would follow this advice.

The large increase in the price of helium that followed Ted's marketing of the helium implant and bra had the unfortunate consequence of making helium balloons quite expensive. This proved to be a major problem for wedding planners and manufacturers of mylar. But Ted had already sold his stock in all mylar manufacturers and closed his line of wedding planning shops. There was an initial outcry from sports fans when the Goodyear Blimp was grounded and replaced by small drone spy planes bought from the CIA. However, this protest quickly died out when the first shots of cheerleaders wearing the helium haltertop appeared on ESPN. And guys quickly figured out, as Ted's ads repeatedly pointed out, that the amount of helium required to fill even one blimp could enhance thousands and thousands of cleavages.

Once the notion of helium products made its way into the public consciousness, other product lines were not hard to think of. Helium basketball shoes, for example. If the “Air Jordan” shoe was a success (which it was), think of how the “Helium Jordan” shoe might have sold. Not only would it cushion the feet like the Air Jordan did, but it would clearly allow players to jump higher. In principle, with enough helium, the problem would be making sure they come back down again, but with reasonable limitations on the size of the shoes that would not be a problem. Ted is at this moment trying to find the right player to wear and endorse his shoes. And it would not be just basketball players who would want them. Imagine volleyball players, ballerinas, mountain climbers, ski jumpers, etc., all wearing Ted’s “Light on Your Feet” line of shoes.

Bubble wrap with bubbles filled with helium rather than air makes packages lighter and cheaper to ship. Bubble wrap is a product of the Sealed Air Corporation, and HeliumWrap became a product of the Sealed Helium Corporation, which of course Ted owned. People found it to be a useful product whose only defect was that it is not suitable for use in locations with tall ceilings unless the user had a good ladder or a long pole with a hook on the end, or had a friend who was a seagull.

Beer glasses with helium in the base would be very useful in preventing elbow fatigue at the bar. They would also give a new meaning to the concept of light beer.

In northern climates, the helium snow shovel might be very popular.

The helium condom could be a good substitute for Viagra.

And the list could, and would, go on and on.

It was the profits from Ted's helium products, and the helium that went into them, that fueled his later industrial, financial and publishing empire, including such familiar companies as PetroFoods, The Whether Bare Channel, Bear Stearnz (Goldman Sachs refused to sell him the rights to the original brand name) and the well known lingerie company, The Bear Minimum. It was also using this money that he was able to implement his shrewd policy of making yearly campaign contributions to every incumbent US senator, and, in those years and states in which a senatorial election was held, to every challenger. But the reader will have to wait until later chapters for details of his later successes.