

Listening 1: The Power of Serendipity

Mary Tanner: Nothing like starting off with a 1..... In 1867, Alfred Nobel 2..... discovered 3..... after putting a popular but 4..... salve on a cut finger. Call it 5..... Rubber—6..... today. Before Charles Goodyear mixed it with sulfur and accidentally dropped it on a hot 7....., it was a smelly, 8..... mess. Again, serendipity. The list of serendipity stories is as long as the history of discovery.

Dr. Morton Meyers: Serendipity refers to looking for one thing and 9..... over something else that proves to be of greater value.

Ms. Tanner: 10..... Dr. Morton Meyers accidentally figured out how 11..... cancer metastasizes by watching where dye he 12..... for X-rays would spread and then collect. He has written Happy Accidents about serendipity in medicine.

Dr. Meyers: What serendipity means is 13....., an 14..... observation that a sharp, open mind can 15..... to find its true benefit.

Mr. Adrian Jones: So, the story goes that Caldi, who happened to be a goat 16....., stood back and watched his goats eating coffee in . . . coffee beans in Ethiopia. 17..... coffee beans. And he sound . . . saw that they really engaged in some strange behavior afterwards, because of the 18.....

Ms. Tanner: Animals, according to food 19..... Adrian Jones, played an important role in early food serendipity. You like cheese? Think dead camel stomachs. 20..... filled them with milk and hung them like sacks from live camels' saddles.

Mr. Jones: . . So, you got the 21..... motion of the camels, you got the rennet of the stomach, you got the milk in the stomach, and that really is the beginning of cheese.

Ms. Tanner: My favorite serendipity story, for 22..... reasons? Post-it Notes. In 1968, a scientist at 3M made an 23..... that wasn't 24..... enough. A thousand Post-it products later, a world without them seems 25..... After the fact, serendipity seems so obvious. If there ever was a place literally in the serendipity business, the MIT Media Lab is it.

Mr. Wells: The whole idea is to bring together people with 26..... different backgrounds—scientists, engineers, designers, 27.....—and have them 28..... in open, play-like environments, to experiment, not to be afraid of failure, and to build.

I think serendipity is 29..... It's not, it's not a 30.....

Ms. Tanner: But it can be fun. During World War II, GE tried to make 31..... rubber. It failed. Nobody could figure out what to do with it until a marketing genius put it in a little plastic egg and sold it as a 32..... toy. More than 300 million little eggs have been sold. Here's the best part: When Silly Putty turned 50 in the year 2000, it got the white glove treatment, as it was 33..... installed in the Smithsonian Institution.