

# Otto's Tales



*The* **NATIONAL INVENTORS  
HALL of FAME**

*Let's Visit*

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# Otto's Tales

*The* *Let's Visit*  
**NATIONAL INVENTORS**  
**HALL of FAME**



**CRUNCH!** Otto and Smidge jumped into piles of colorful leaves in the backyard. Dennis ran out to join them.



## “Ruff Ruff!”

What are you wearing?” Otto asked his best friend.

“Safety goggles!” Dennis explained. “They protected my eyes during our science fair at school today!”

Smidge’s eyes flared with excitement. “Did you make lava explode out of a volcano?!”



Dennis chuckled. “No, but I did see a lot of cool inventions. Someone made a robot that can do lots of neat tricks. He’s going to get a **patent** for it.”



“What’s a patent?” Otto asked.

“It’s a document that gives you the right to your idea, so no one else can take credit for it,” Dennis shared.





“I have a *great* idea for an invention,” Smidge spoke up. “I want to make a food bowl with a special lock, so only I can open it. It’ll be called the ‘Safe Snack Bowl.’”

“I definitely need one of those.” Otto winked.



“What will you make it out of?” Dennis asked. “I could get you some wood from my woodshop class.”

“My food bowl is metal. You could try that,” Otto suggested.



Smidge thought about it. "I don't know. I wonder what other inventors used."



Dennis got an idea. "You can check out the **National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum**. They have tons of inventions on display from America's history!"

"Perfect!" Smidge jumped up. "Let's check it out!"

In front of Dennis's house, the friends settled into their neighbor's shiny convertible car. "This is fancy!" Smidge marveled. "Are you sure you can't join us?" she asked Dennis.

He shook his head. "You two go ahead, I need to study. And remember, Old Man Strazzeri wants his car back by tonight."



"You got it!" The friends **ZOOMED** off to Alexandria, Virginia.

They arrived at a tall building, and as they waited to enter the museum, Otto noticed Smidge scribbling on a piece of paper.



“What are you writing?” The bulldog peered closer.

“I’m sketching my invention and making notes.” Smidge showed her design.

“Hmm.” Otto pointed. “Maybe change this here.”

Smidge yanked her paper away. “It’s not done yet, okay?”





An elephant held the door open for them. “Hiya! I’m Ivory.” Smidge and Otto admired her stylish outfit.

“I’m Smidge, and this is Otto,” the kitten greeted. “You’ve got a cool style, Ivory! Do you work here? Are you an inventor?”

Ivory giggled. “No, I wish!! I’m just a regular visitor and an **innovation** geek.”

“What’s your favorite exhibit in the museum?” Otto asked.

The elephant trumpeted her trunk in excitement. “Oh, there are so many to choose from... let me show you!”



## National Inventors Hall of Fame

Ivory walked proudly through the exhibits. “Did you know this museum is considered America’s national monument to innovation? All of these displays show our history of achievement and ingenuity.”

“There’s a lot of old stuff in here,” Smidge noticed. “Where’s all the cool, new stuff?”



Ivory stopped at a glass case. “Every invention has to start somewhere. Here, look at this.”

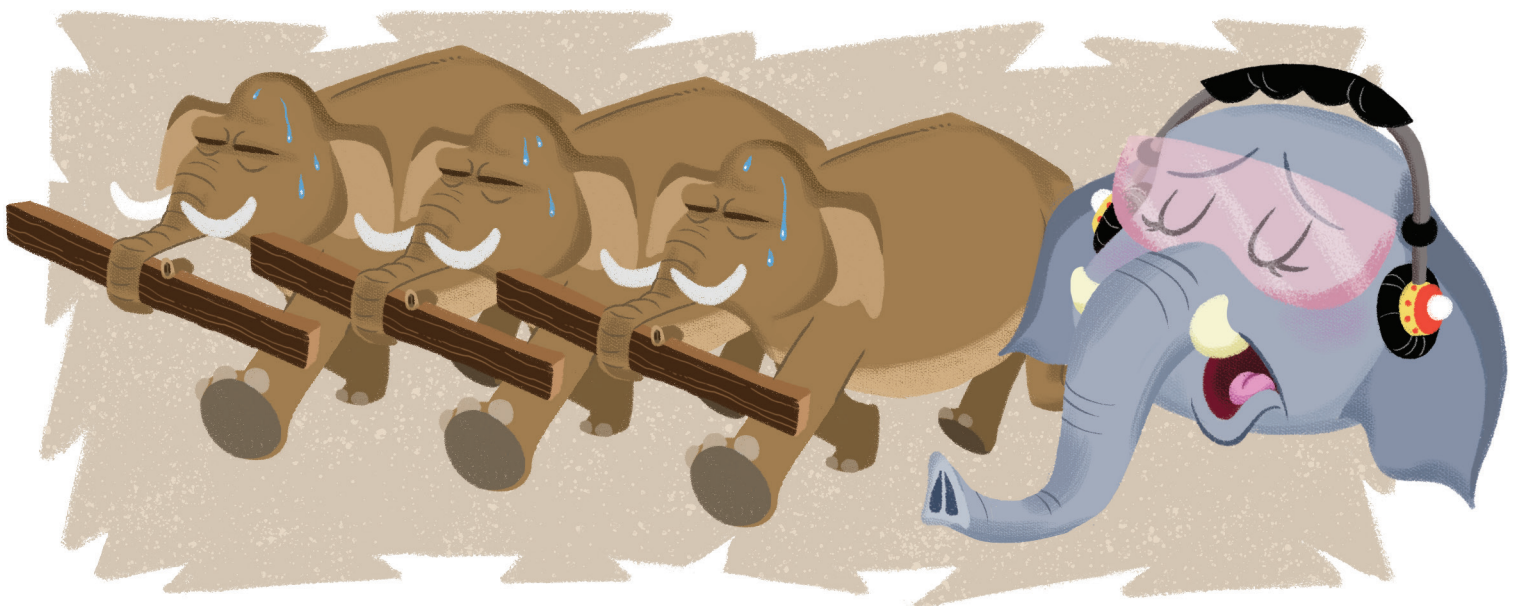
Otto observed the display. “Woah, check out this construction hat! I see people wearing these all the time.”



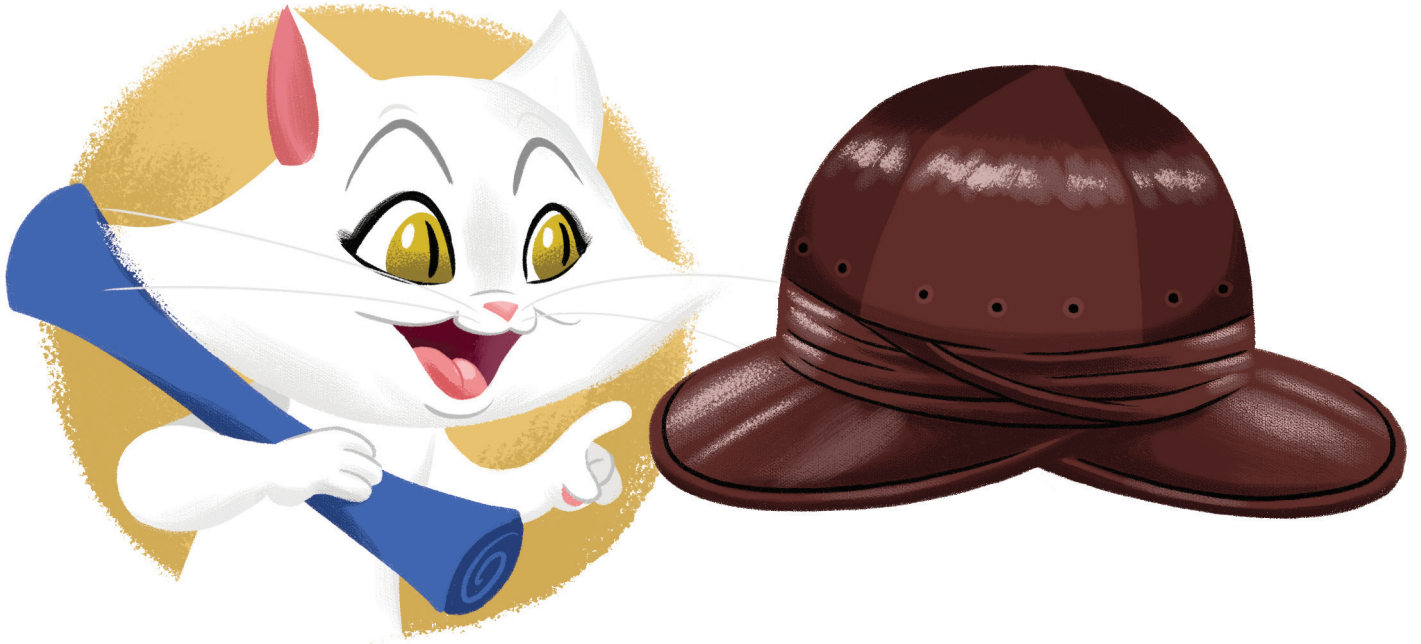
Ivory grinned. “That’s right. Welcome to the ‘100 Years of the Hard Hat’ exhibit. This area shows our progress in safety equipment. Before these hats, worker injuries were a lot more common.”

“This invention has protected people’s lives,” Otto said in amazement.

“You betcha,” Ivory replied. “Innovation makes life better. Thanks to advances in technology, my species is more protected. Elephants used to transport heavy supplies and build roads in other countries, but now machines help with that; and the things they made out of our tusks, like combs and utensils, can now be made with invented materials such as plastic.”

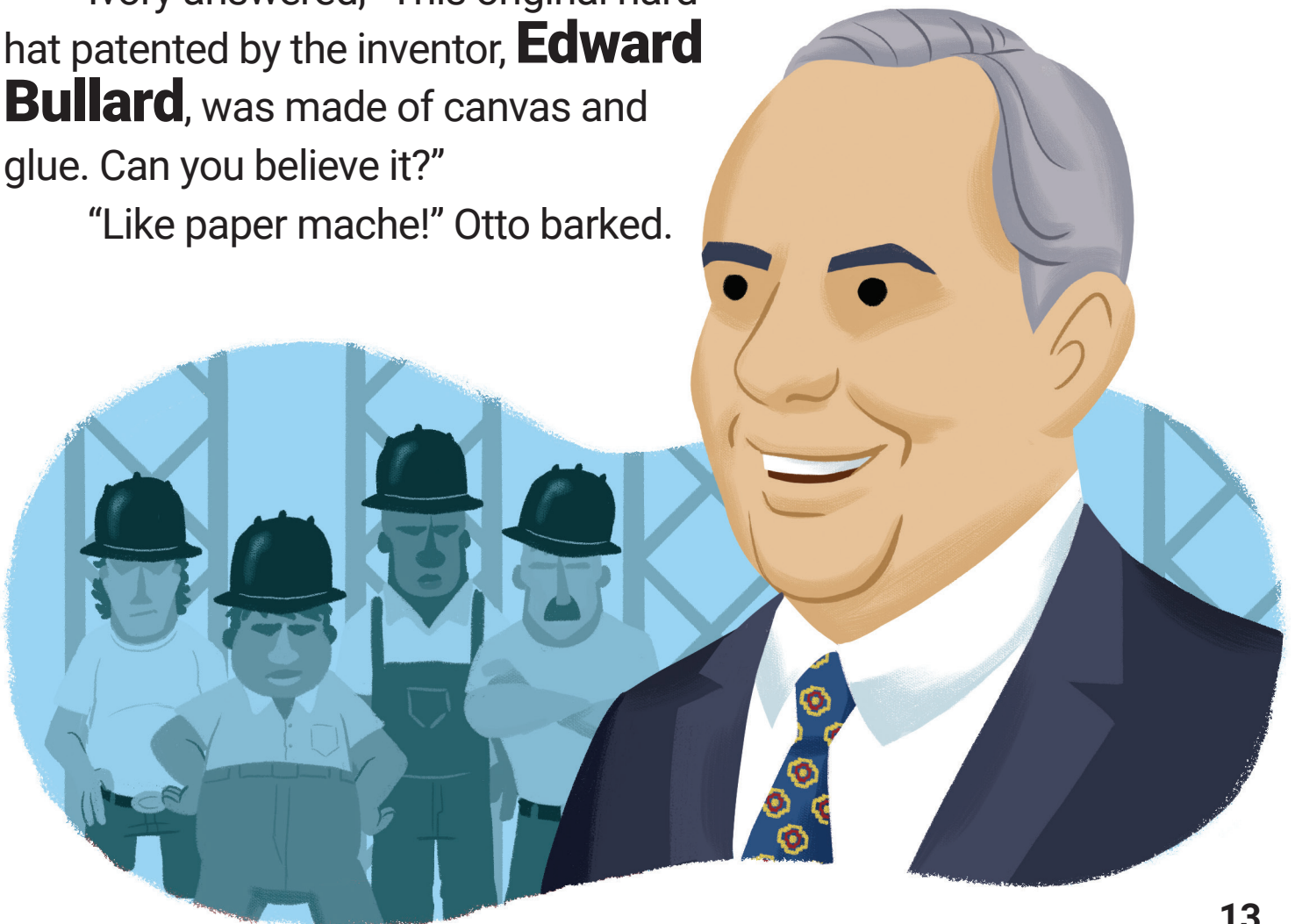


“Wow, things have really come a long way.” Smidge peered closer at one of the first hats on display. “Do you know what this was made out of?”



Ivory answered, “This original hard hat patented by the inventor, **Edward Bullard**, was made of canvas and glue. Can you believe it?”

“Like paper mache!” Otto barked.





Smidge had an idea. “I can make my bowl out of paper mache. That’s easy!”

Ivory shook her head. “But it’s not sturdy. Throughout its history, you can see that the hard hat design changed to be more durable, lightweight, and affordable. That’s the beauty of innovation!”

Otto and Smidge studied the exhibit and compared all the materials before them.

“I’m definitely not going to make it out of ivory,” Smidge said.

“No way!” Otto exclaimed. “But, you can make your bowl out of plastic!”

“I was just going to say that!” Smidge interjected. “It was my idea.”

“I said it first,” Otto retorted.

“But I was *thinking* it,” Smidge defended.

“Thinking it doesn’t count,” Otto said, matter-of-factly.

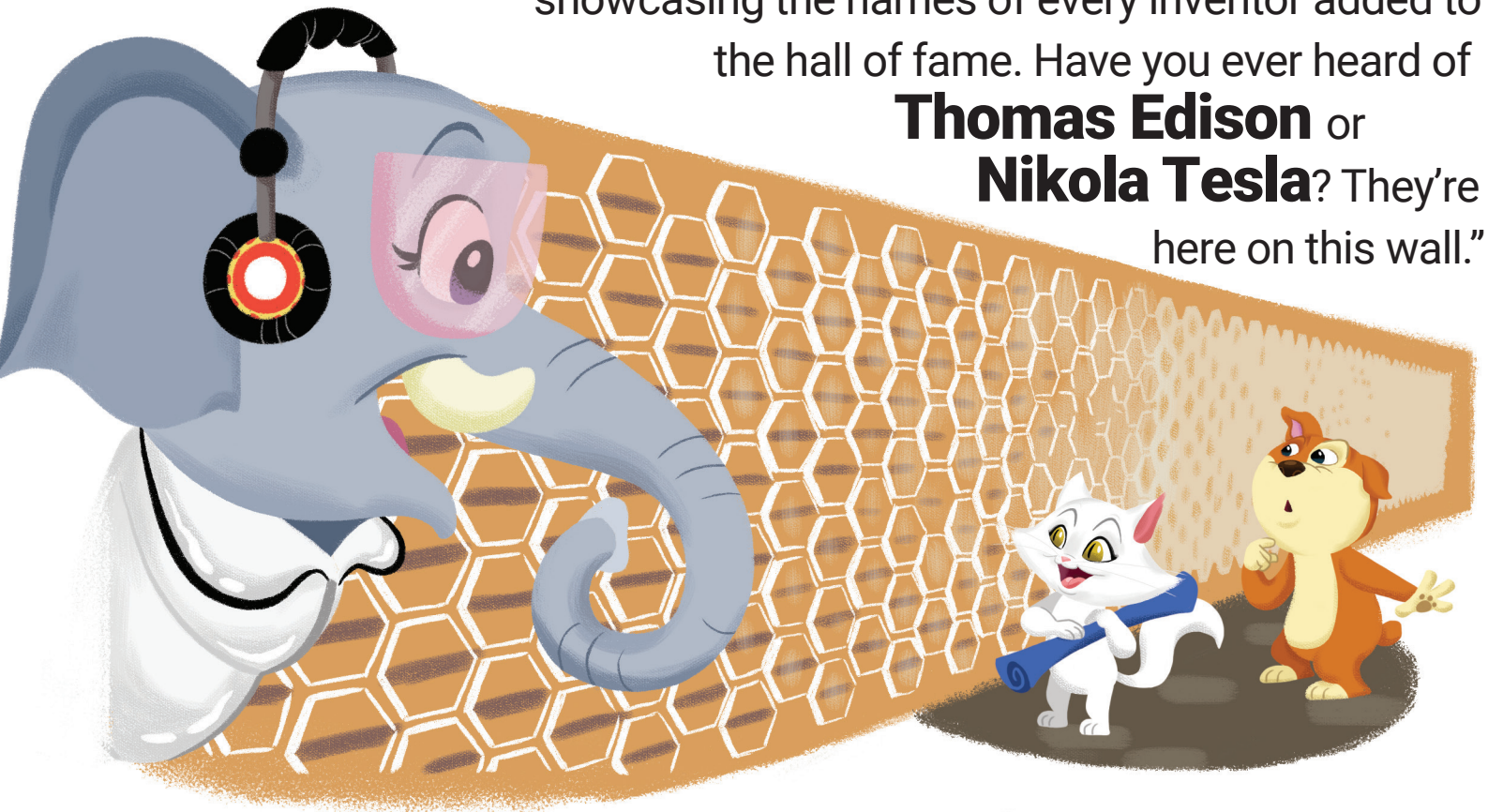


Ivory interrupted, "Woah, calm down. You two remind me of some other inventors I know who battled over ideas."

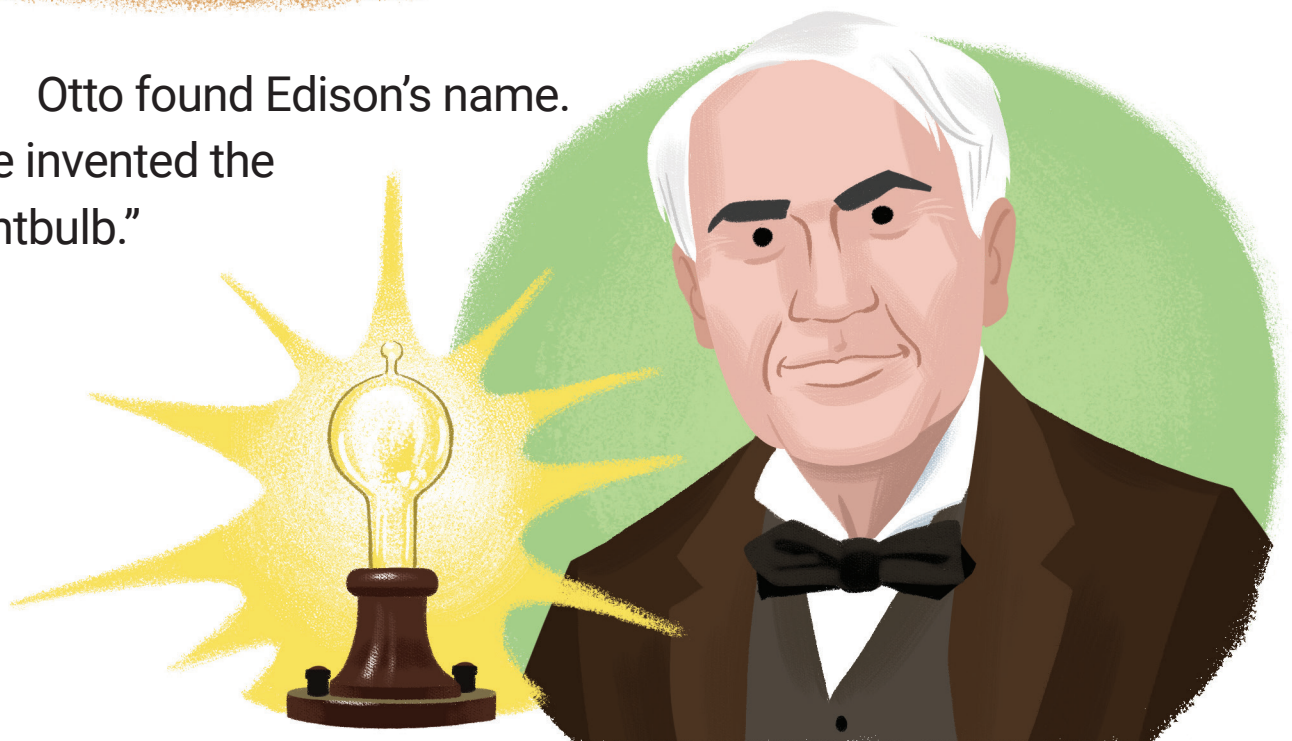
The friends paused their bickering. "Who?"

Ivory smiled and led them to another display that featured a wall with hundreds of names. "This is the Gallery of Icons, showcasing the names of every inventor added to the hall of fame. Have you ever heard of

**Thomas Edison** or **Nikola Tesla**? They're here on this wall."



Otto found Edison's name.  
"He invented the lightbulb."



“That’s right,” Ivory nodded. “Most people know Edison and his ideas about using **direct current** for electrical systems, but fewer people know Tesla, who helped establish the **alternating current** electrical system that’s used worldwide today.”

Smidge found Tesla’s place on the wall. “What’s the difference between their ideas?”

“Using direct current for electrical power was more popular at the time because it was easier and safer to use, but it wasn’t as efficient as alternating current for transmitting over long distances. So, the two men were in a ‘War of Currents’ to provide power to cities around the country,” Ivory explained passionately.

“Who won?” Smidge asked eagerly.



“Well...” Ivory looked between the friends. “It’s complicated. We still use both forms of current today, and it’s thanks to the ideas of *both* men. Their competition gave us the better, more efficient systems we use today. Isn’t innovation awesome?!”

Otto frowned.  
“So us fighting over an idea is good?”

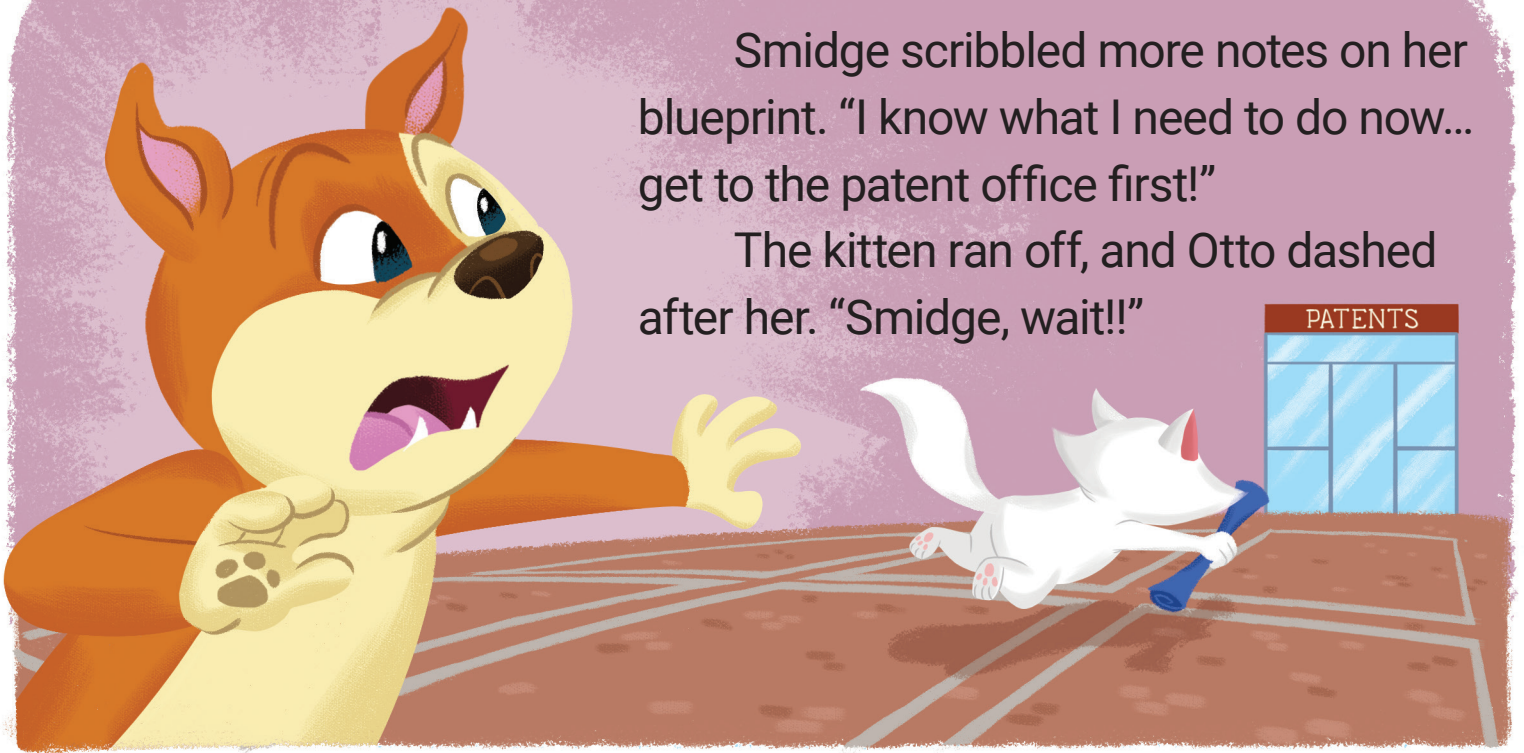


Ivory invited them closer. “Fighting isn’t the same as competition. Competition is about pushing each other to do better. Look at all the businesses in America. They flourish because they have to keep improving, or people will go to their competitors.”



Smidge scribbled more notes on her blueprint. "I know what I need to do now... get to the patent office first!"

The kitten ran off, and Otto dashed after her. "Smidge, wait!!"



"Gee whiz!" Ivory exclaimed, pursuing the duo. With her large strides, she quickly caught up to the friends.

"Wait," Ivory pleaded. "Just think about this for a minute."

"Smidge," Otto chimed in. "I'm not trying to take your idea. I want to help you make it better."





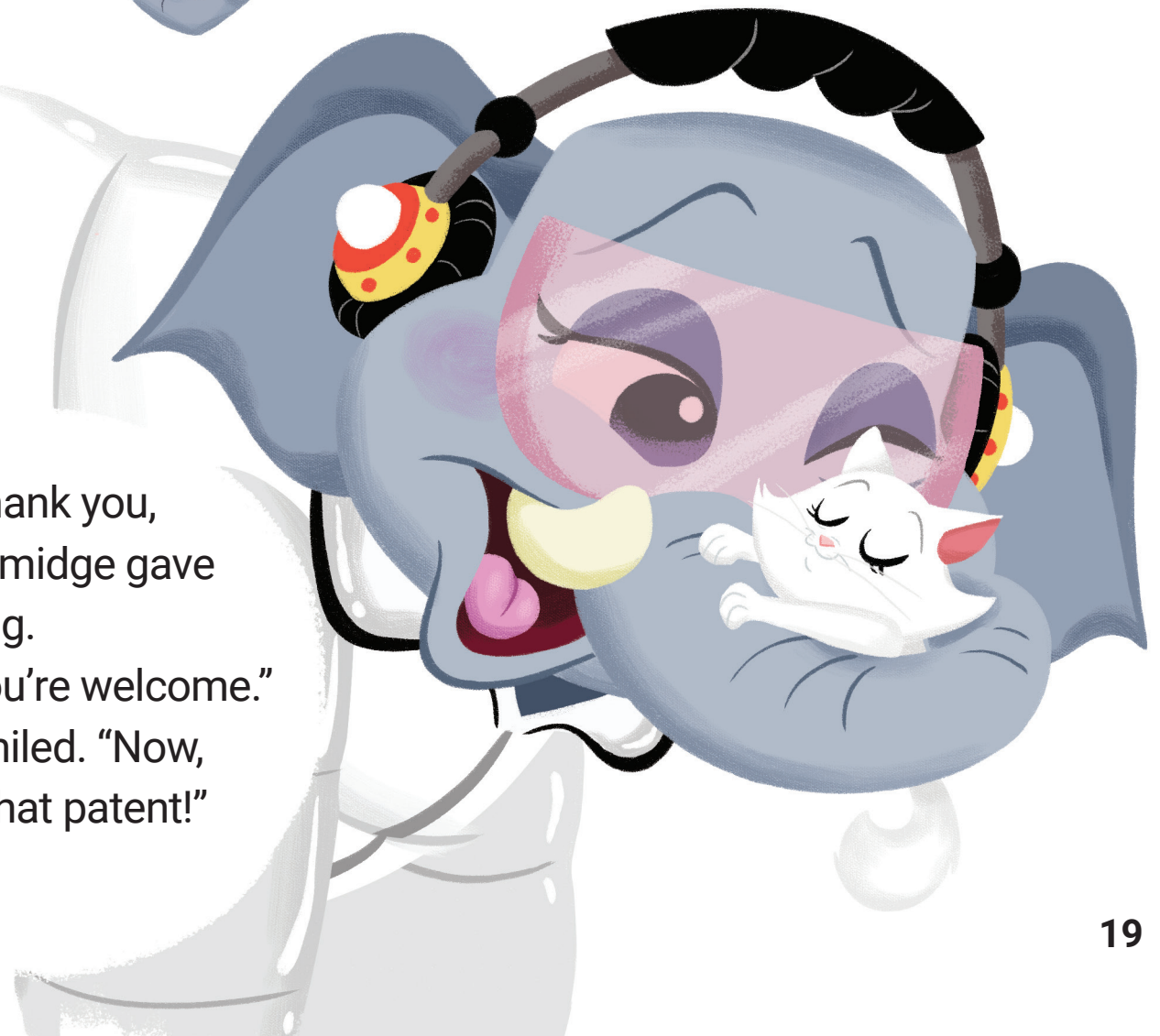
Ivory held Smidge's gaze. "Think of what Edison and Tesla could have accomplished together if they hadn't let their ambitions come between them."

Smidge turned to Otto. "Your ideas did help. Why don't we patent it...together?"

"Let's do it!" Otto cheered.

"Thank you, Ivory." Smidge gave her a hug.

"You're welcome." Ivory smiled. "Now, go get that patent!"



Together, they found the patent office and eagerly approached a snail sitting at a desk.



“Welcome to the **United States Patent and Trademark Office**,” the snail spoke slowly. “My name is Mr. Terry Stall. You can patent any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter. Does your idea meet these criteria?”



“Yes, Mr. Stall,” Smidge said nervously. “The Safe Snack Bowl is new *and* useful.”

Mr. Stall looked over her blueprint, taking his time.



“Well?” Otto asked. For a moment, he thought Mr. Stall forgot about them!

The snail turned his attention back to them. “It’ll take a lot of paperwork and time. We get over 600,000 applications a year. Best to go home and wait.”



“Oh.” Smidge was disappointed.  
Mr. Stall inched a new document over to them.  
Otto grabbed it and showed Smidge. “It says  
'patent **pending**.' It's a start!”



The kitten perked up. “In the meantime, we still have a **prototype** to make. Let’s pick up supplies on the way home!”

Otto howled, “Dennis is going to love this!”



The friends arrived home with  
bags of all sorts of materials.  
“What’s all this?” Dennis asked.



“The supplies for my Safe Snack Bowl!” Smidge exclaimed. “At the National Inventors Hall of Fame, our cool new friend Ivory showed us different kinds of hard hats that have been made throughout history. Over time, the original idea was improved by using new materials to make it the best it could be, to protect people.”



Otto jumped in. “We realized Smidge’s bowl should be made of plastic! Even though we fought over whose idea it was, we learned that competition drives innovation. So, we applied for the patent together, as business partners.”



Dennis grinned. “That’s great. Just like the lock on your bowl will protect your food, a patent will protect your idea! Did they accept it?”

The kitten presented her paper. "We have a patent pending!"



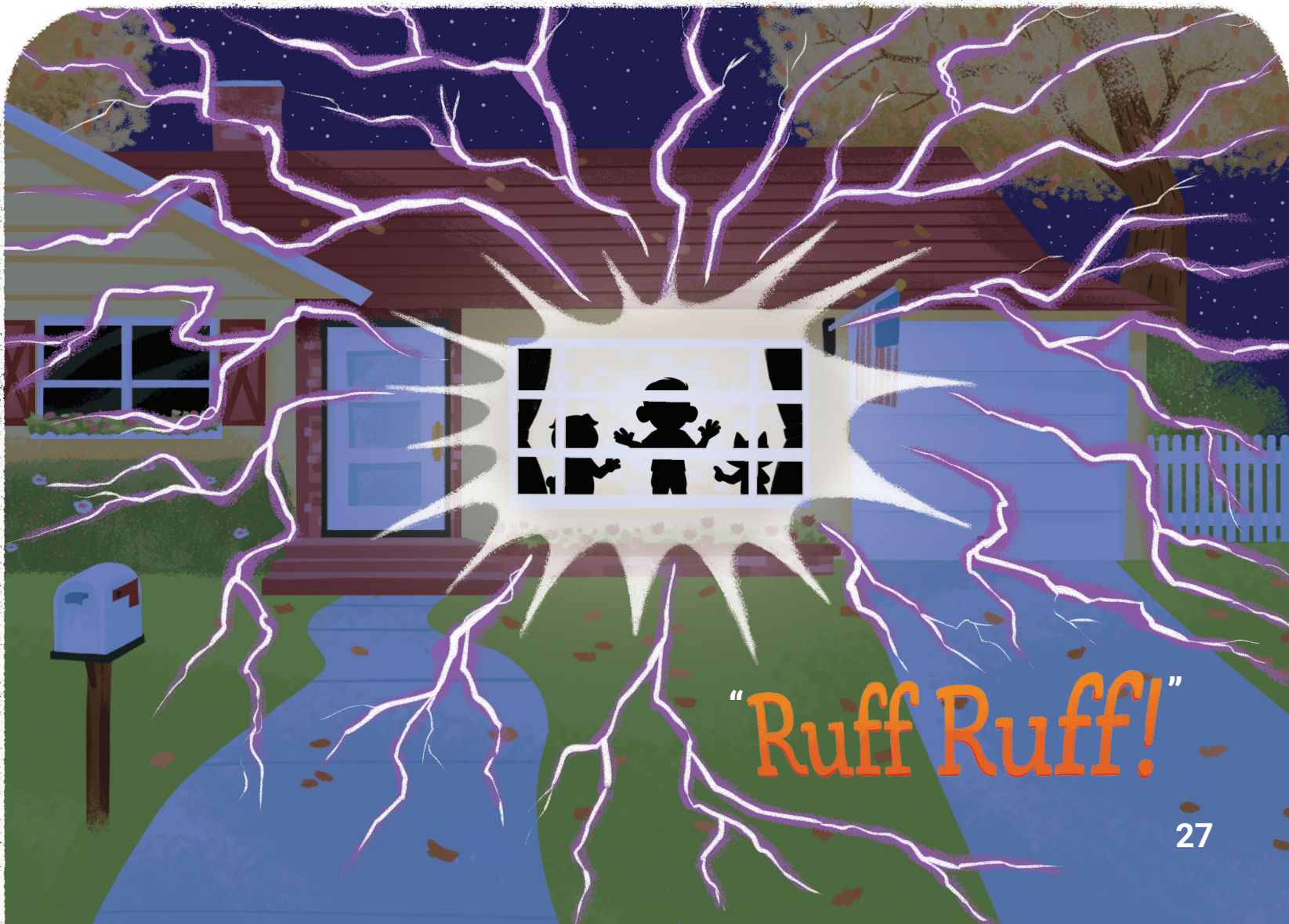
"That was my favorite adventure yet!" Otto barked.

"You say that every time, Otto," Dennis laughed.





Smidge rubbed her paws together. "Alright, time to make our prototype. Everybody put on your safety goggles."



**"Ruff Ruff!"**



# We Love Our History

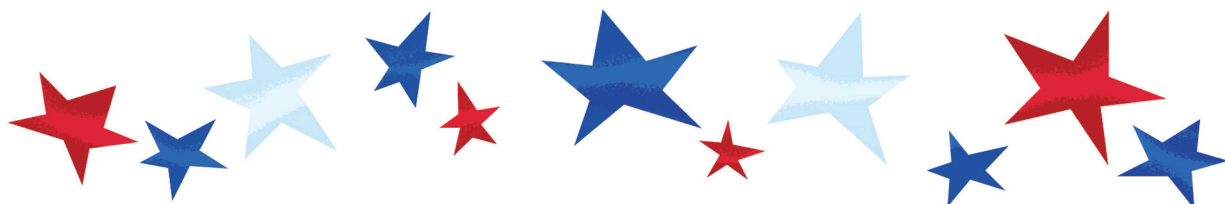
**Patent:** A legal property right granted to an inventor. Patents are only effective within the United States and typically last 20 years from the date on which the application for the patent was filed.

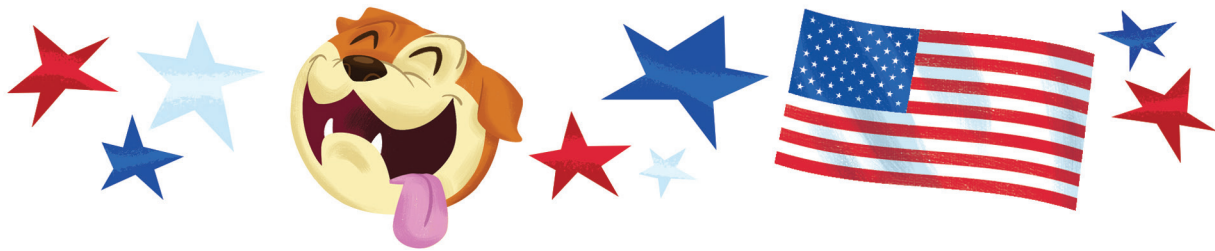
**National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum:** Founded in 1973 in partnership with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to recognize individuals who have conceived, patented, and advanced the world's greatest technological achievements. Located in Alexandria, Virginia, it is considered America's "national monument to innovation."

**Innovation:** The development of new designs, ideas, or products, or improving on already existing ones.

**Edward Bullard:** Edward W. Bullard invented the hard hat, the first commercially available industrial head protection device. His first one was called the "Hard Boiled Hat" and was made out of canvas and glue. Over time, this invention has become a mandatory piece of equipment for protecting millions of workers around the world. Bullard was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2022.

**Thomas Edison:** An American inventor, scientist, and businessman who is widely considered one of the most important and prolific inventors in history. He's best known for creating the first incandescent lightbulb. Edison received patents for over a thousand inventions and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1973. His method of electric power was called direct current.





**Nikola Tesla:** An American inventor, electrical engineer, and physicist. He invented the induction motor and made alternating current a popular form of electric power. Tesla patented over 100 inventions and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1975.

**Direct Current:** An electrical current that flows in one direction only. This means that the flow of electrons is constant in the same direction through a circuit or conductor, unlike alternating current, which periodically changes direction. A common example of this is a device running on a battery.

**Alternating Current:** An electrical current that periodically reverses its direction of flow. Common examples include electrical power, home appliances, and lighting.

**United States Patent and Trademark Office:** Located in Alexandria, Virginia, it is the office that grants new patents to inventors. It fulfills Article 1, Section 8, Clause 8 of the Constitution, which requires the Legislative Branch to give authors and inventors the right to their respective works. The USPTO receives over 600,000 patent applications each year and grants about 350,000.

**Pending:** Waiting for something to happen or be decided on.

**Prototype:** The first example or model of something, from which all later versions or forms are developed.



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**See you in  
our *next* adventure!**

- Dennis, Otto,  
*and* Smidge

**ABOUT**

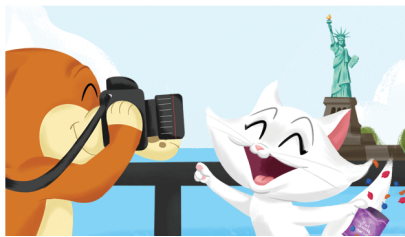
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**TODAY IS**  
Celebrating American  
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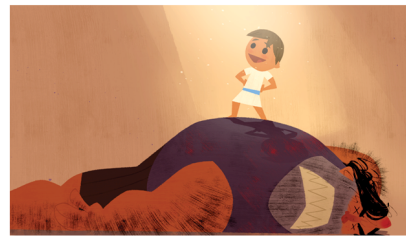
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