

This Month's Stiff: Georg Simon Ohm

Entered Mortal coil: 16 March 1789

Assumed Room Temperature: 6 July 1854



**Georg Simon Ohm**

One of the favorite movies of my misspent youth was National Lampoon's *Animal House*. In this film, we see fraternity boys carousing, drinking, womanizing, gambling, and generally not taking anything seriously. Not surprising is the fact that most of the boys have abysmal grades, and that their fraternity has been placed on "super secret" probation. Georgy would have fit right in. Ohm's father, Johann, was a self-educated working class man, i.e. blue collar, who had apparently busted his chops getting Georgy into Erlangen University. The old man was fed up with rumors of his son's excessive dancing, ice skating, and pool playing. After only three semesters, Georgy was pulled out of school and sent to Switzerland where he more or less had to grow up.

What followed after this enforced leave of absence from Erlangen was a series of unsatisfying teaching posts as young Ohm drifted through life. All he wanted was a full professorship at a prestigious institution. Ohm further educated himself and conducted independent research while holding a teacher's position at the Jesuit Gymnasium of Cologne starting in 1817. Publishing his research, Georgy realized, would get him that coveted post...and research he did! In 1827, after a considerable amount of labor, head scratching, and experimentation, he published his results in the paper *Die galvanische Kette, mathematisch bearbeitet*. This was quite a mouthful, even in German (read Mark Twain's essay, "The Awful German Language", if you really want to laugh). Anyway, the end result of all that formal written Hun verbosity was

$$E = I \times R$$

**Volts = Amperes times Ohms.**

This simple little formula defines all things electrical and electronic. If you don't know it, learn it, or at least do a little bit of research on your own. I can't do everything for you kids, okay?

Unfortunately, this electrical thunderbolt out of the blue went largely unnoticed, and Ohm's theory was greeted with less than rampant enthusiasm from his professional peers. In 1841, the Royal Society awarded Georgy the Copley Medal, acknowledging his contributions in electrical research. In 1852, Ohm achieved his lifelong dream and became the Chair of Physics at the University of Munich. The Reaper had the last laugh as poor Ohm only got to enjoy the fruits of

his labor for two years before being mowed down by the aforementioned Reaper's scythe in 1854. Poor Georgy!!!!

Ohm's Theory is now Ohm's Law. Learn it. Live it. Don't ever forget it!!!

References: Mark Twain, "The Awful German Language", <http://www.bdsnett.no/klaus/twain/>

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