

Self mating socks

As Thomas Edison is often quoted as saying "*Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration*".

I know this is certainly the case with the socks.

The inspiration happened one morning when my wife was complaining yet again about not being able to find an actual pair of socks. Naturally I offered to help, but the question "*aren't these a pair?*" was met with a snort and the look, clearly indicating that I couldn't tell that those two socks were not really identical.

This ritual had been performed almost daily since we were married, but for some reason this morning it struck a nerve and I was determined to use technology to solve the problem once and for all. Socks that would find each other. Self mating socks.

For several days I thought about socks and socks and socks. The first problem is that you buy more socks than just a single pair. So how would each pair know that they were not the same as the other two pairs from that bag. That and how to make the solution work after the first load of laundry. Many false starts later, I was ready to actually perform an experiment on making socks mate. To say that the first trial run was not really the success I was hoping for would be understatement. My wife came into the work room and looked over my shoulder.

"*So, you wanted a large ball of socks?*" she asks.

"*No. I was trying to get the individual pairs to mate.*" I reply tartly.

She just gave me the look that clearly said I had lost my mind again.

Apparently just giving the socks some sort of charge was out. All you ended up with that way was a large ball of clean socks sitting in the middle of the dryer. Fortunately after the kitchen incident I thought things out more thoroughly and had purchased these socks at the local thrift outlet instead of using socks from around the house. The dryer was also a lab item now, after finding an old one on Craig's List for cheap. You can never be too careful with the lab gear, after all your wife might have planned on using that crock-pot to cook tonight's dinner.

Experiments with magnets showed about the same result. One large ball of socks, sort of [Koosh](#) (tm) looking, but not really the desired result. Ruling out the electromagnetic forces left me with a real mental block as to how to proceed, and the sock project ended up shelved for quite some time.

Working on a different project that involved muscle-wire (tm), RFID chips and some really strange ideas on micro-robotics, I had a breakthrough on the sock issue. Socks that actually know each other, and can find each other in a pile. The heat from drying them imparts enough energy to activate the system, and it slowly stops as they cool. Watching the socks crawl toward each other in the laundry basket is apparently a little disconcerting, but apart from that small issue I call them a success.

So now the socks are really well behaved. Each pair has an identity, and they find each other as they cool. Your socks are sorted and matched by the time you pull them from the laundry basket.

So what should they be called, that won't devolve into mirth at the mere mention of the name?