



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to Wilson Greatbatch
Innovative Lives Presentation

NMAH.AC.0601

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Wilson Greatbatch Innovative Lives Presentation |
| Date: | 1996-10-08 |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0601 |
| Creator: | Greatbatch, Wilson, 1919- Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation. Berger, Sondra |
| Extent: | 0.25 Cubic feet (3 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | This collection contains original and master videos documenting Wilson Greatbatch, inventor of the Cardiac Pacemaker. Greatbatch demonstrates the circuitry of his implantable pacemaker and discusses his life as an inventor. |

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was created by the Innovative Lives Program of The Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation on October 8, 1996. The Innovative Lives series brings young people and American inventors together to discuss inventions and the creative process and to experiment and play with hands-on activities related to each inventor's product.

Ownership and Custodial History

The collection was transferred to the Archives Center on July 9, 1997.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Alison Oswald, July 1997.

Preferred Citation

Wilson Greatbatch Innovative Lives Presentation, 1996, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research but the original videos are stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Museum controls rights. Signed release on file.

Biographical Note

Wilson Greatbatch was born in Buffalo, New York in 1919. He received his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Cornell University in 1950 and his master's degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo in 1957. Greatbatch first learned of heart block in 1951. He knew that a pacemaker could cure it, but he couldn't build one small enough to be implanted with the materials then available. Conducting research and experiments in a workshop in the barn behind his house in upstate New York, Greatbatch invented in 1958, the device that has saved hundreds of thousands of lives over the years. In 1970, he founded Wilson Greatbatch, Ltd. (WGL), to develop and manufacture reliable, long lived batteries for the implantable pacemaker. WGL produced the first lithium iodine battery for implantable pacemakers in 1972. In addition to numerous honors and awards, Greatbatch was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1986.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of approximately 2 hours of original (BetaCam SP) video recordings and reference (viewing) copies (VHS) documenting Wilson Greatbatch's presentation about the invention of the cardiac pacemaker. Dr. Greatbatch demonstrates the circuitry of his implantable pacemaker and discusses his life as an inventor.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into three series.

Series 1: Original Videos

Series 2: Master Videos

Series 3: Reference Videos

Series 4: Photographs and Slides

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Cardiac pacemaker industry
- Cardiac pacemakers
- Cardiac pacing
- Electric engineering -- 1950-2000
- Heart block
- Inventions -- 1950-2000
- Inventors -- 1950-2000
- Photographs
- Slides

Types of Materials:

- Interviews -- 1980-2000
- Oral history -- 1990-2000

Videotapes -- 1990-2000

Names:

Wilson Greatbatch, Ltd.

Container Listing

Series 1: Original Videos and Audio (OV 601.1-4; OTC 604.1), 1996-10-08

1 Cassette

Box 1 (OV)

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Series 2: Master Videos (MV 601.1-4), 1996-10-08

Box 2

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Series 3: Reference Videos (RV 601.1-2), 1996-10-08

Box 3

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Series 4: Photographs and Slides

Box 3

[Image\(s\)](#)

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