



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation and Interview

NMAH.AC.0642

Kimberly Tarr.

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation and Oral History
<b>Date:</b>	1998
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0642
<b>Creator:</b>	Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation. (Creator) Swanson, Jackie (Interviewee) Swanson, Janese (Interviewee)
<b>Extent:</b>	1.5 Cubic feet (4 boxes,)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Janese Swanson developed video game software, a website, and an array of toys and gadgets aimed at making technology more accessible to girls. The collection contains approximately six hours of original and reference video footage of Swanson's Innovative Lives Presentation, in which she discussed her background and demonstrated her inventions with her daughter, Jackie. The material also includes a brief interview.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was transferred to the Archives Center by the Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation in 1998.

### Provenance

This collection was recorded by the Innovative Lives Program of the Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation on March 25, 1998. The Innovative Lives series brings Museum visitors 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.

### Processing Information

Processed by Kimberly Tarr (project archivist), December, 2009; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

### Preferred Citation

Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation and Interview, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

### 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](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu) or 202-633-3270.

## Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions. Copies of oral history releases on file.

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## Biographical / Historical

Janese Swanson, a native of California, was the founder and CEO of Girl Tech (1995), a company created to bring girls into the world of technology. The second of six children, Swanson was raised by her mother after her father died in the Vietnam War. From a young age, Swanson had an interest in technology, often tinkering with household appliances. Building on her experience as a flight attendant and school teacher, Swanson served on the team at Broderbund Software that developed the video game *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* She produced *Playroom* and *Treehouse*, early learning software, and has developed award-winning curricula, electronic toys, and books that encourage girls to explore technology and inventions. Some of Swanson's toy inventions include the Snoop Stopper Keepsake Box, Me-Mail Message Center, Zap N' Lock Journal, YakBak, and Swap-It Locket. Her publications include *Tech Girl's Internet Adventures*, *Tech Girl's Activity Book*, and *Girlzine: A Magazine for the Global Girl*. Swanson received her Ed.D. in Organization and Leadership Technology in 1997 from the University of San Francisco.

The Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation was founded in 1995 at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History through a generous gift from the Lemelson Foundation. The Center's mission is to document, interpret, and disseminate information about invention and innovation; to encourage inventive creativity in young people; and to foster an appreciation for the central role invention and innovation play in the history of the United States. The Innovative Lives series brings together museum visitors and, especially, school aged children, and American inventors to discuss inventions and the creative process and to experiment and play with hands-on activities related to each inventor's product. This collection was recorded by the Innovative Lives Program of the Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection contains six (6) hours of original (BetaCam SP) recordings, six (6) hours of master (BetaCam SP) recordings, and six (6) hours of reference (VHS) copies documenting the life and work of Dr. Janese Swanson, inventor of toys, books, a website, magazine, and software. This video documentation was created on March 25, 1998. The recordings include a presentation by Swanson for the Lemelson Center's Innovative Lives Program. Audience participants are students from Thoreau Middle School (Vienna, Virginia), Options Charter School (Washington, D.C.), Carrollton Elementary School (New Carrollton, Maryland), and Rosa Parks Middle School (Olney, Maryland). The collection also contains a brief interview with Dr. Swanson.

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## Arrangement

The collection is organized into three series.

**Series 1, Original Videos, 1998**

**Series 2, Master Videos, 1998**

**Series 3, Reference Videos (viewing copies), 1998**

**Series 4, Photographs and Slides, 1998**

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Computer software -- Development
- Inventions -- 20th century
- Inventors -- 20th century
- Toys -- 20th century

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews -- 1980-2000
- Oral history -- 1990-2000
- Photographs
- Slides (photographs) -- 20th century
- Videotapes -- 1990-2000

### Names:

- Girltech

### Preferred Titles:

- Innovative Lives Program (NMAH public program series)*

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Original Video, 1998

Box 1, Video OV  
642.1-6

Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25

Notes: Beta Cam SP original video cassettes with a total running time of six hours.

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## Series 2: Master Videos, 1998

Box 2, Video MV  
642.1-3;

Box 3, Video  
MV642.4-6

Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25

Notes: Beta Cam SP master video cassettes with total running time of six hours.

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## Series 3: Reference Videos (viewing copies), 1998

Box 4, Video RV  
642.1Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25  
Notes: Total Running Time: 1:00:08, Camera A

Martha Morris, National Museum of American History deputy director, provides opening remarks for the 13th Innovative Lives program and introduces Swanson. Swanson discusses how her desire to introduce technology to girls led her to create the company, Girl Tech. She notes that parents purchase technology twice as much for boys than girls. Presentation includes demonstration of Girl Tech website and search engine. Assisted by her eleven-year-old daughter, Jackie, Swanson reviews various toys and games geared toward young women and describes how her inventions differ. Answers questions from students.

Box 4, Video RV  
642.2Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation and Interview, 1998 March 25  
Notes: Total Running Time 54:02, Camera A

Continuation of presentation that begins on 642.1. Swanson provides advice for girls interested in becoming inventors. Outlines how her background and experience as a school teacher and flight attendant contributed to the creation of "Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?" Responding to questions, Swanson discusses the development of her ideas and the freedom that comes from creating. In the second presentation, Swanson discusses growing up as one of six children. Her daughter, Jackie, discusses "Take Your Daughter to Work" Day. Swanson shows advertisements and encourages discussion. Through education, she discovered that there are more differences among girls than between girls and boys. Disappointed in the way in which toy companies have marketed to girls, she created her company, Girl Tech.

Box 4, Video RV  
642.3Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25  
Notes: Total Running Time: 29:18, Camera B

Same information as RV 642.1, but shot at a different angle and includes audience reaction. Bars, tones, and time code.

Box 4, Video RV  
642.4Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25  
Notes: Total Running Time: 29:52, Camera B

Same information as RV 642.1, but shot at a different angle and includes audience reaction.

Box 4, Video RV  
642.5Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25  
Notes: Total Running Time: 37:35, Camera A

Much of the content is the same as RV 642.1 but shot at a different angle to include Swanson speaking. Toys and games are displayed. Swanson discusses specific toys currently on the market, such as



Dream Phone and Mall Madness. Introduces her voice recognition invention.

Box 4, Video RV  
642.6

Janese Swanson Innovative Lives Presentation, 1998 March 25

Notes: Total Running Time: 5:36

Interview with Swanson in which she discusses her vision for Girl Tech, philosophy of the company and provides advice to inventors. Swanson describes a need for increased financial education for women.

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## Series 4: Photographs and Slides, 1998

*Box 4, Folder 1*

[Image\(s\)](#)

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