

Text N°5: Remote Control Inventor Dies Aged 96

The inventor of the television remote control has passed away at the age of 96 (22nd May, 2012). The Associated Press news agency reported that Eugene J. Polley died of natural causes on Sunday. His creation is one of today's most commonly used and ubiquitous devices. Mr. Polley worked as an engineer for a company called Zenith, now part of Korea's LG Electronics. He introduced his gun-shaped remote control, called the Flash-Matic, in 1955. It was one of 18 patents he owned. The Flash-Matic used light to turn the TV on and off, adjust the volume and change channels. His invention was followed up five years later by fellow Zenith engineer Robert Adler, who used ultrasound instead of light. Today's remote controls use infrared light.

Polley worked for Zenith for 47 years and held some top technology posts. In 1997, the USA's National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences honoured him by awarding him with an Emmy Award for 'Pioneering Development of Wireless Remote Controls for Consumer Television'. Polley's invention is something we all take for granted nowadays. Generations of people have grown up not knowing that before remote controls, people actually had to leave the sofa and push a button or turn a dial to change their TV settings. Today we use remotes for everything from adjusting the brightness of lights to changing songs on our iPods to opening the garage door from 30 metres. Life would be quite different without this handy gadget.

Sean Banville, www.thebreakingnewsenglish.com, May 22nd, 2012