

Audio systems pioneer Villchur dies at 94 in NY

October 18 2011



Edgar Villchur is seen in an undated photo provided by the Villchur family. Villchur, who went from repairing radios in his New York City shop to inventing ground-breaking audio equipment and hearing aids, died Monday at his Woodstock home, his family said Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2011. He was 94. (AP Photo/Villchur family)

(AP) -- Edgar Villchur, who went from repairing radios in his New York City shop to inventing groundbreaking audio equipment and hearing aids, has died. He was 94.

Villchur died Monday of natural causes at his Woodstock home, his daughter, Miriam Villchur Berg, said Tuesday.

After serving as an Army electronics officer in [World War II](#), the Manhattan native opened a radio repair shop in Greenwich Village, where he built custom home high-fidelity sets. He moved to Woodstock in 1952, and it was while living there and teaching an acoustics class at New York University that he came up with the idea for the acoustic suspension loudspeaker, said Berg, a Woodstock resident.

The closed-cabinet device was much smaller than the audio equipment of the era, and Villchur's invention was credited with bringing hi-fi into people's homes. His AR-3 speaker is on display in the Smithsonian Institution.

"He found that loudspeakers didn't need to be 6 feet tall. They could sit on a book shelf," his daughter told The Associated Press.

Villchur produced the prototype for what became known as the AR speaker in a bedroom-turned-workshop he set up in the family home, she said. He received a patent for his new loudspeaker in 1952, two years after founding Acoustic Research Inc. with Henry Kloss, one of his NYU students.

The company produced the popular line of AR hi-fi loudspeakers, turntables and other stereo components Villchur designed. After selling the company in 1967, he went into hearing aid research and developed the multichannel compression hearing aid that has become the industry standard.

Berg said her father first tried to sell his loudspeaker prototype but found no buyers. Instead, he went into business for himself, starting a company that provided health insurance and profit sharing at a time when such benefits were uncommon among American companies in the 1950s and '60s.

Villchur is survived by his wife of 66 years, Rosemary, his daughter, and a son, Mark, of Boston.

Funeral services are private. A memorial service will be held Sunday at the Woodstock Artists Association.

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