

Inventor of first wireless TV remote control dies at 96

May 22 2012

Eugene Polley, who in 1955 invented the first wireless remote control for television, has died of natural causes, his longtime employer Zenith Electronics said Tuesday. He was 96.

In a statement, Zenith -- a subsidiary of South Korea's [LG Electronics](#) formerly known as Zenith Radio Corporation -- said the Chicago native passed away in hospital on Sunday.

Polley joined Zenith Radio in 1935, where his 18 patented inventions included the Flash-Matic remote control, a flashlight-like device that could turn a television set on and off and change channels as well.

It functioned with four photo cells fitted on each corner of the [television screen](#), but it was not without its problems -- notably on sunny days -- and it was succeeded by the ultrasonic Zenith Space Command in 1960.

During [World War II](#), Polley worked at Zenith on US military [radar systems](#). Later he helped to develop push-button car radios as well as video disks, the predecessor of today's DVDs.

He shared an Emmy award in 1997 with Space Command inventor Robert Adler for pioneering wireless remote control devices for consumer television.

Polley was preceded in death by his wife Blanche and his daughter. He is survived by his son and grandson, who live in San Diego, California.

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