

INVENTING MODERN AMERICA:
FROM THE MICROWAVE TO THE MOUSE
A Publication of The Lemelson-MIT Program

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insight
STEPHANIE KWOLEK

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▶ **Stephanie Kwolek**
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Biography

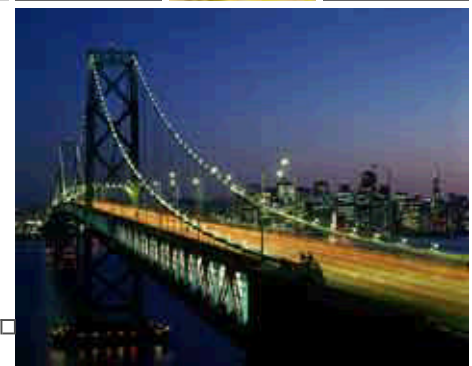
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Interview

The odd, cloudy batch of polymers that DuPont chemist Stephanie Kwolek mixed up in 1964 might have seemed like a mistake to another researcher. But she was more intrigued than disappointed, and continued to work with the chemicals. Her diligence paid off—that milky batch of chemicals led to the development of Kevlar, a super-strong, super-stiff fiber that has saved thousands of lives.

A deep curiosity and a love of discovery
"I'm very conscientious," Kwolek says. "And I discovered over the years that I seemed to see things that other people did not see. Also I love doing chemistry, and I love making discoveries. Generally, if things don't work out I don't just throw them out, I struggle over them, to try and see if there's something there . . . You have to be inquisitive about things. You have to have an open mind."



Kevlar has found hundreds of applications, including strengthening the cables that hold up suspension bridges.



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