

Nuggets of Fun and Nostalgia for Treasure Valley Golden-Agers

He Used the Wrong Part

Wilson Greatbatch reached into his box of parts without looking closely. His eyes were tired after hours at his workbench. He needed a resistor. He grabbed one. The color bands looked right in the dim light.

They were not.

It was 1956 at the University at Buffalo. Greatbatch was an electrical engineer trying to build a device to record heart rhythms for research. Nothing big. Just a recorder to help doctors listen to the heart.

He soldered the wrong resistor into the circuit. He connected the wires. He turned on the power.

The circuit did not record anything. It began to pulse. Blip. One second of silence. Blip. One second of silence.

Greatbatch watched the green line on his oscilloscope. A spike appeared for 1.8 milliseconds, then disappeared. Exactly one second later, it came back. Perfect rhythm. Perfect timing.

This was not a failed recorder. It was something that created rhythm instead of recording it. The mistake was beating like a real heart.

"I stared at the thing in disbelief," he later wrote, "and then realized this was exactly what was needed to drive a heart."

He had seen a heart block before. When the heart's electrical system fails, it can stop beating properly. In the 1950s, this often meant death.

The only treatment was harsh. External pacemakers were as big as televisions. They plugged into the wall. They sent strong shocks through the skin. The shocks burned the chest. Patients screamed. They could not leave the room because they were tied to a power cord. If a storm cut the electricity, the machine stopped. The heart stopped. The patient died.

Greatbatch looked at his small circuit. It fit in his hand. A new thought came to him. It did not need to stay outside the body. It could go inside.



(Continued on page 2)

What Time is Tee Time?

Norman is 89 years old. He's played golf every day since his retirement over 20 years ago. One day he arrived home upset.

"That's it," he told his wife. "I'm giving up golf. My eyesight is so bad that once I hit the ball I can't see where the stupid thing goes."

His wife sympathized and made him a hot cup of tea. She asked him, "Why don't you take my brother, Byron, with you and give it one last try."

"That's a terrible idea" said Norman, "your brother's 97 years old. How could he help?"

"He may be 97 years old", she said, "but his eyesight is perfect."

Norman figured he'd give it a try, so the next day he headed off to the golf course with Byron. He teed up,



takes a mighty swing and squints down the fairway.

He turned to the brother-in-law and asked, "Did you see the ball?"

"Of course I did!" replied the Byron. "I

have perfect eyesight".

"Where did it go?" asked Norman.

"Where did what go?" said Byron. "Do I know you?"



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My Father Won't Like It!

A clergyman was walking down a country road when he saw a young man struggling to load hay bales back on a cart after they had fallen off.



"You look hot, my son," said the cleric, "Why don't you rest a moment, then I'll give you a hand."

"No thanks," said the young man. "My father won't like it."

"Don't be silly," the minister said. "Everyone is entitled to a break, especially on such a hot day. Come, sit and have a drink of water."

Again the young man protested that his father would be upset.

Losing his patience, the clergyman said, "Your father must be a real slave driver! Tell me where I can find him so I can give him a piece of my mind!"

"Well," replied the young man. "He's under this load of hay!"

(He Used the Wrong Part—Continued from Page 1)

Doctors had a firm rule. Electronics do not belong inside the human body. The body is wet and salty. It destroys metal quickly. It rejects foreign objects. Batteries then contained toxic chemicals. Putting one inside a person seemed dangerous.

Most experts agreed. External machines were painful, but safer than putting electronics in the chest.

Greatbatch went home and checked his savings. He had 2,000 dollars. It was his only safety net.

He did not wait for approval. He cleared space in his barn in Clarence, New York. He withdrew the money. He told his wife Eleanor they would grow vegetables to save money. He quit his job.

For two years, the barn became his lab. The hardest problem was protecting the device from the body.

He wrapped parts in tape. Fluids got in. He tried epoxy. It cracked. He tested different rubbers and plastics. Each failure costs money. His savings were shrinking.

Doctors warned him. "The battery will die," they said. "Then you must cut them open again."

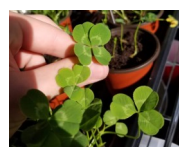
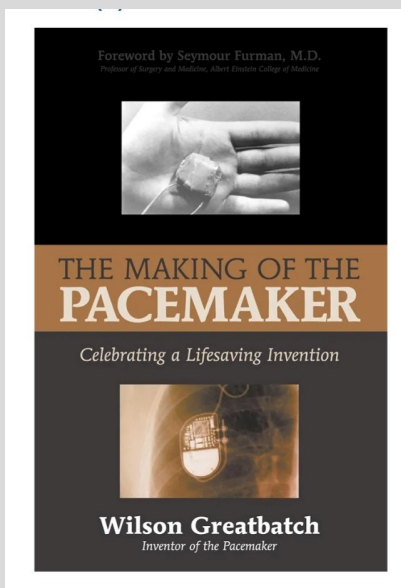
Engineers warned him too. Corrosion. Battery life. Legal risk.

He kept going. He worked through winter with a wood stove. The barn smelled of solder and chemicals. Eleanor helped test parts at home.

He found support from Dr. William Chardack at the VA Hospital in Buffalo. Surgeon Andrew Gage joined them. They tested the device in a dog in 1958. The dog's heart began beating in time with the device. It worked for four hours before fluids damaged it.

Greatbatch improved the design. He found a special epoxy used for boats. He remade the device. This time it lasted days. Then weeks.

(Continued on Page 5)



For my college botany project I crossed a four-leaf-clover with poison ivy

and got a rash of good luck. I was just itching to tell my professor.

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Not Your Run-of-the-Mill Old Couple

In a quiet, picturesque village, there lived a couple admired far and wide for their astonishing vitality. The husband was 102 years old, and his wife, a sprightly 98.

Despite their age, they worked their small farm daily—fit, cheerful, and full of life.

One sunny afternoon, a curious visitor came by, eager to learn their secret.

He found the old man shirtless, chopping wood with ease, his muscular frame glistening with sweat—looking decades younger than 102.

The visitor called out, “Excuse me, sir! I heard you’re 102?”

The old man nodded with a grin. “That’s right.”

“That’s incredible! You look amazing!”

“Thanks,” the old man said, setting down his axe.

“What’s your secret? How do you stay so fit?”

The old man motioned to the pile of wood. “Help me carry this to the house, and I’ll tell you.”

They hauled the wood inside, and once seated, the old man leaned in and said, “My wife and I have been married 75 years. Early on, we made an agreement: Whoever lost an argument would have to run 5 miles.”

He chuckled. “Let’s just say... we’ve had a typical marriage. I’ve been running nearly every day for 75 years.”

The visitor laughed, then asked, “But what about your wife? She’s just as healthy!”

The old man winked. “Oh, that’s easy—she runs after me to make sure I finish the whole five!”



Unspoken Rules Everyone Knew Growing Up in the 40s and 50s

1. You didn’t spend too much time on the phone, especially if it was a party line. And you don’t call someone after 9:00 p.m.—it meant bad news, or disrespect.
2. You dress up for church, funerals, and flights. No sweatshirts, jeans or other casual clothing. You wore your best, even to board a plane.
3. You say “Thank you” to store clerks, waitresses, and anyone who served you. Courtesy wasn’t optional. You were raised to show it.
4. You returned what you borrowed in better shape—clean, fixed, or even improved.
5. You eat what’s served, even if you don’t like it. No special requests. You’re not a guest—this is dinner. Eat it or stay hungry.



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First-time Fliers

Ollie and Beatrice were on their first airplane ride from Omaha to visit their cousins in Florida. They were pretty nervous. Ollie held his wife's hand tightly even after takeoff.

It was a very uneventful flight for the first hour when the captain's voice came over the loudspeaker: "Folks, I just wanted to inform you that one of the engines has quit. There is no danger whatsoever, as this aircraft can easily fly on three engines, but we'll be one hour late into Miami."

About half an hour later, the captain announced "Folks, we've lost a second engine. We are still safe, but we will be 2 hours late into Miami."

Another half hour later, the captain came back on the loudspeaker: "Folks, I don't know what's going on, but we've lost a third engine. Don't panic, this plane has been designed to fly safely on only 1 engine, but we will be 3 hours late into Miami."



At this point Ollie worriedly looked at Beatrice and said "You know, dear, if that last engine goes out, we could be up here day!"

\$250,000 an Acre — But Some Things Are Priceless

Developers are offering me \$250,000 for a single acre of my farm.

At first glance, it sounds like a dream. But for me, it's a reminder of the pressure closing in on farms like mine.

My land sits in what they now call a "land shortage" zone — where open fields vanish each year, replaced by rows of houses and sprawling shopping centers.

This farm has stood for 313 years. My family has tended it for the past 92, just as three families did before us. We've worked these fields through good harvests and bitter losses, through summer droughts and winter storms. We've trusted the soil to give back what we've poured into it — sweat, hope, and generations of love.

Developers stop by often, speaking in numbers: how many houses they could build here, how much profit they'd make. But they don't see the history in these fences, the calluses in my hands, or the late nights spent praying over a sick crop.

Farming isn't easy. It demands your body, your time, your patience — and your faith. Yet it's a life I wouldn't trade for anything. There is quiet joy in planting seeds, caring for them, and watching them grow into food that feeds not just my family, but my neighbors too. Even in the hardest seasons, farmers rise again. Because next year always holds another chance.



So during this harvest season, I ask one thing of you: support your local farms. Here's how you can help keep them alive:

- Cook more meals at home with farm-fresh produce.
- Choose milk from nearby dairies.
- Visit farmers markets in your area.
- Spend a day at a farm — meet the people who grow your food.

Once farmland is developed, it's gone forever. The only way farms survive is when their communities choose to stand with them. Every choice you make at the market is a vote for the future you want — one that keeps green fields, fresh food, and hardworking farmers alive. Choose local. Eat local. Protect the hands that feed you.



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(He Used the Wrong Part—Continued from Page 2)

On June 6, 1960, a 77-year-old man with complete heart block was dying at Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo. His heart beat so slowly he often blacked out. He even wore a football helmet to protect his head from falls. There were no options left.

Surgeons opened his chest. They attached wires to his heart. They placed Greatbatch's small device in his abdomen. They closed him up.

Everyone waited. Lub dub. Lub dub. They turned off the external machine. They unplugged it from the wall. His heart kept beating.

For the first time in the United States, a fully implanted machine was keeping someone alive.

The man left the hospital. He lived 18 more months and died from other causes.

In 1960, nine more patients received Greatbatch's pacemakers. One young factory worker recovered, found a new job, joined a bowling league, and was still alive when Greatbatch met him again 30 years later.

The biggest problem was battery life. Early patients needed surgery every two years.

In the early 1970s, Greatbatch developed a lithium iodide battery that lasted more than 10 years. That design is still used today.

He held over 150 patents. In 1970, he founded Wilson Greatbatch Ltd, later called Greatbatch Inc. It became a major maker of implantable lithium batteries.

He believed his discovery was guided by God. "The Lord was working through me," he said.

Today, nearly one million pacemakers are implanted each year around the world. Millions of people walk with a small device inside them, keeping steady time.

It began because one tired engineer picked up the wrong part, saw what it could do, and refused to ignore the rhythm of a human heart.

Wilson Greatbatch died on September 27, 2011, at age 92. His barn in Clarence still stands as a reminder of what one person with 2,000 dollars and an accidental discovery can do.



FINISH THAT JINGLE:

That's a spicy _____!

I'd rather fight than _____.

Plop, plop, _____, _____.

Good to the last _____.

Don't squeeze the _____.

Where's the _____?

I can't believe I ate the _____!

You've come a long way, _____.

Snap, crackle, _____.

Rice Aroni, the _____ treat.

You'll wonder where the _____ went.

Takes a lickin' and keeps on _____.

See the USA in your _____.

A little dab'll _____.

Bet ya can't eat _____.

We're gonna wash that _____
right out of your hair.

ANSWERS:

Meatball, switch, fizz, drop,
Charmin, beef, whole thing, Baby,
pop, San Francisco, yellow, tickin',
Chevrolet, do ya, just one, gray

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You Don't Say!

A university English professor was lecturing his class the other day.

"In English," he said, "a double negative forms a positive. However in some languages, such as Russian, a double negative remains a negative."

He continued, "But there isn't a single language, not one, in which a double positive can express a negative."

A voice from the back of the classroom piped up, "Yeah, right."

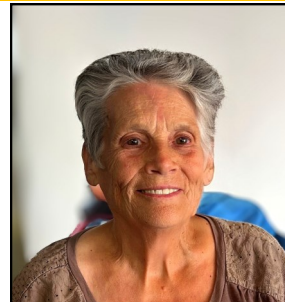


Milestones



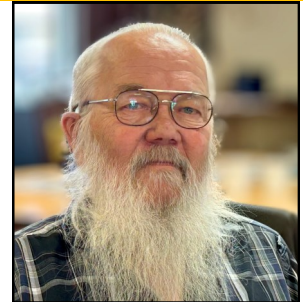
Steve Cooper

Aug 8, 1946—80 years
Weiser



Rhonda Boyle

Aug 11, 1951—75 years
Payette



John Seeba

Aug 16, 1951—75 years
Weiser



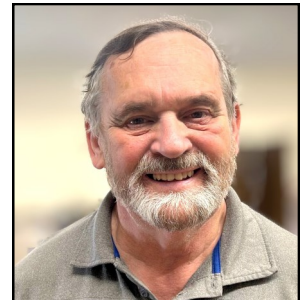
Carol Stephan

Aug 22, 1951—75 years
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Mary Ziegler

Aug 24, 1951—75 years
New Plymouth



Everett Parker

Aug 26, 1951—75 years
New Plymouth



Linda Lloyd

Aug 6, 1956—70 years
Payette

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