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## Inventor OF THE Week

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#### **GEORGE MARGOLIN** **Cinematic Background System**

George D. Margolin has been a professional inventor and product developer for over 30 years, with successes in the realms of optics, computers, commerce, and medicine.

In college, Margolin majored in Journalism and Political Science; but his graduate work (at Columbia University) was in Photographic Science. He worked as Technical Editor at Popular Photography Magazine, before joining forces in the 1960s with Sherman Fairchild to found Front Projection Corporation.

Here, as Vice President and General Manager, Margolin applied his expertise in photographic technology to develop and market his first major invention: the Front Projection Background System. This system creates realistic backdrops for motion pictures, especially science fiction and action films. In fact, Margolin's system won an award for its contribution to Stanley Kubrik's "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968). The system is still used in movie studios around the world.



Later, Margolin moved on to the realm of portable technology. He founded another company, Micro Display Systems, Inc., in New York, and here developed the world's first truly portable microfiche reader, with a lens assembly that allows for a fold in the optical path (patented 1978; licensed to Bell & Howell). As the personal computer became more popular, Margolin invented the first electronic fold-out keyboard, which was also removable and replaceable (patented 1974; licensed to Hewlett Packard; still featured today in various high-tech products).

Returning to the realm of optics, Margolin earned a number of patents



for scanner technology (1987-89), including elements of the first fiberoptic scanner and the first wide-format engineering scanner and printer. Along with these items, Margolin has invented a broad range of commercial products: to date, he has earned 25 US patents, with others pending.

Margolin is now President of Margolin Development in Newport Beach, California. He also works as a corporate product development consultant, under the memorable name of "Rent an Inventor." His recent projects include improved medical syringes: one has a needle that automatically retracts after use, to prevent accidental sticking (patented 1993). When he is not inventing, Margolin also gives lectures and lobbies on behalf of American inventors.

"Curious George" Margolin claims that the key to success as an inventor is, in a nutshell, "Be a child!" By which he means: keep an open and optimistic mind, ask questions, imagine possibilities, and never be afraid to make mistakes. Certainly, Margolin's own career proves that this theory works.

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