

INVENTOR & MAKER OF THE WEEK

Stephanie Kwolek

INVENTOR OF KEVLAR



Stephanie Kwolek was born in 1923 in Pennsylvania, USA. As a child she loved science and spent hours exploring nature and collecting plants with her father.

Stephanie originally planned to become a doctor. She studied chemistry at university, then took a job working as a scientist to save money for her doctor training. Back then, few women were scientists, but during World War II more women were needed in those jobs. Stephanie found her work in chemistry so exciting that she decided to stay in the lab instead of becoming a doctor.

In the 1960s, she was asked to develop strong but lightweight materials for car tyres. During her experiments, she discovered a strange liquid that behaved differently from anything she had seen before. When it was spun into fibres, it created a material five times stronger than steel but much lighter.

This new material was called Kevlar. Today Kevlar is used in bulletproof vests, helmets, spacecraft, ropes, and more.

Stephanie spoke about her challenges as a woman in science, and encouraged girls to become scientists.

