William P. Lear Encyclopedia Article

William P. Lear

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Contents

William P. Lear Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

William P. Lear.....3

William P. Lear

1902-1978

American engineer best known for his work with corporate jet aircraft. Lear also designed one of the first practical automobile radios, cramming a large volume of equipment into a package small enough to fit into a standard car. He later designed a radio amplifier that became the basis for all RCA radios for many years, and invented the once-popular 8-track tape player. In the aviation industry, Lear developed a lightweight automatic pilot device, aircraft navigational aids, and in 1962 founded Lear Jet Corporation, the renowned manufacturer of small jet aircraft for private and business travel.