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**Creator:** Van Arnem, Heidi.  
**Title:** Heidi Van Arnem papers.  
**Inclusive dates:** 1977-2003  
**Bulk Dates:** 1994-2001  
**Extent:** 3 linear feet and 1 oversized volume.  
**Call number:** 2009126 Aa 2

**Language:** Material is in English  
**Acquisition:** The collection was donated by Karen Schram (donor no. 10219) in 2009.  
**Accruals:** No further additions to the collection are expected.  
**Access:** The collection is open without restriction.  
**Photographs:** Located in box 1.  
**A-V Material:** Betacam and U-matic tapes in box 2; VHS tapes in box 3.  
**Digital Material:** One digital photograph CD and one DVD in box 1.  
**Audio Material:** One audio cassette in box 1.  
**Copyright:** Copyright is held by the Regents of the University of Michigan.  
**Processed By:** Rachael Dreyer, 2009.

## **Abstract**

Entrepreneur and disability rights activist from Birmingham, Michigan. The collection document's Van Arnem's life and career through news clippings, columns that Heidi Van Arnem wrote for the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*, business materials, files relating to her advocacy and fundraising efforts, and visual materials.

## **Biography**

Heidi Van Arnem was born July 31, 1966. In 1983, at the age of 16, she was paralyzed after an accidental shooting; she was shot in the neck, severing her spinal cord. She became a quadriplegic. Van Arnem returned to school and was graduated from Lahser High School in 1985. She attended Oakland University, graduating in 1989, and enrolled in law school at University of Detroit. Because of her health, Ms. Van Arnem withdrew from law school and instead established her own travel agency business. Her company - Travel Headquarters - specialized in arranging travel for individuals with disabilities and other mobility issues, such as senior citizens. While operating Travel Headquarters, Ms. Van Arnem started the Heidi Van Arnem Foundation, a non-profit organization with the goal of curing paralysis. Through annual fundraisers, the Foundation raised \$100,000 annually for spinal injury research.

In 1999, after selling Travel Headquarters, Van Arnem founded iCan, Inc., an online community for those with disabilities. iCan provided an avenue for advocacy and social networking, but also provided consulting services to corporations revising employment and accessibility policies after the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990.

Throughout the 1990s, Van Arnem wrote newspaper columns for Detroit-area papers. Open Roads (1992-1997) was a column carried by the Detroit Free Press and Disability Today (1997-2001) ran in the Detroit News. Both columns discussed disability rights issues from the perspective of as a person with disabilities and highlighted the challenges of navigating able-bodied society.

Van Arnem's other entrepreneurial activities include selling a device that more easily allows a caretaker to lift a disabled individual. The "Slinger" was invented by Van Arnem's mother, Karen Schram but was patented and marketed by Van Arnem on the iCan website.

Heidi Van Arnem died of respiratory failure on November 11, 2001 at the William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, MI. She was 35.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection is arranged into four series, Personal and Entrepreneurial, Fundraising and Advocacy, News Clippings, and Visual Materials.

**Personal and Entrepreneurial** files contain interviews with Van Arnem, awards received, and obituaries and memorial material. Included is an interview transcript of a WJR interview with Paul W. Smith, as well a cassette tape with an audio recording of the interview. This series also contains material about Van Arnem's patent for the "Slinger" and iCan, Inc. press releases and publicity materials. The series also contains a scrapbook, which contains material from Van Arnem's childhood and teen years, class photographs and a confirmation bulletin, with sporadic additions from 1977 until 1995.

**Fundraising and Advocacy** files document Van Arnem's involvement with the Heidi Van Arnem Foundation, including fundraising activities, her participation in various events meant to raise awareness of disability issues, and correspondence regarding her fundraising and disability advocacy activities.

**News clippings** is comprised of newspaper and magazine clippings, including columns that Van Arnem wrote for the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News, newspaper articles about general disability issues, biographical and profile articles about Van Arnem, and clipping files with material about her business ventures, Travel Headquarters and iCan, Inc.

**Visual Materials** has been divided into two subseries. **Photographs** can be found in box 1 of the collection. Many of the photographs document the Heidi Van Arnem Foundation annual Golf Classic. The **Videotapes** series consists of 25 VHS, eight Betacam, and two U-matic tapes, containing interviews, Heidi Van Arnem Foundation promotional videos, television news segments featuring Van Arnem, and awards presentations.

**Box No. Description**

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**Personal/Entrepreneurial**

**Out. Vol.**

Scrapbook, 1977-1995 (includes 6<sup>th</sup> grade class photo, athletics award certificates, confirmation and commencement bulletins, cards, letters, and clippings)

**Box 1**

United States Patent: Method for Lifting and Transferring a Disabled Person to and from a Wheelchair, 1994  
Awards: Golden Apple, 1997; Women of the Web, 2000; Community Luminary, undated  
Interviews with Heidi Van Arnem, 2000 (includes cassette recording of Paul W. Smith interview, WJR Detroit 760  
I-Can, Inc. Press Releases and Publicity Materials, 2000-2001  
Memorials and Obituaries, 2001-2002

**Fundraising and Advocacy Files**

Spring into Fashion Benefit, 1994  
Heidi Van Arnem Foundation Golf Classic, 1995-1997  
Wayne State University, Disability Awareness Awards, 1997  
Spend a Day in a Wheelchair, 1997-1998 (includes photographs and news clippings  
“Rack ‘Em Up for Paralysis” Billiards Event, 1998  
Executive Declarations and Certificates from Governor John Engler, 1997-1999, 2001  
Heidi’s Dream Ball, 2002-2003 (includes CD of photographs, from 2002; DVDs of the 2002 and 2003 events  
Correspondence (scattered dates)

**News clippings**

Open Roads Column, 1994 and undated  
Biographical, 1996-2001  
Disability, General, 1996-2000  
Travel Headquarters, 1996-1997  
Disability Today Column, 1997  
Disability Today Column, 1998  
Disability Today Column, undated  
I-Can, 2000-2001  
Heidi Van Arnem Disability Consumer Research Report, 2002

**Visual Materials**

**Photographs**

Childhood  
Formal and Informal  
Portraits of Family and Friends  
Heidi Van Arnem Foundation Golf Classic  
1997 (2 folders)  
1998  
1999-2000  
Undated (2 folders)  
Group photos  
Miscellaneous

**Box No. Description**

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**Visual Materials (cont.)****Videotapes**

## Betacam

**Box 2**

Heidi Van Arnem (3 tapes)  
 Heidi Van Arnem Foundation Radio Spot, 06/21/1999  
 Heidi and Stevie Wonder, 2001  
 Heidi's Dream Ball commercial, 2003  
 Unidentified Heidi Van Arnem Foundation event  
     Opening Speaker (Tape 1)  
     Christopher Reeve Speech (Tape 2)

## U-matic

The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, "Just a Step Away," 1993  
 Heidi Van Arnem Foundation Video, ca. 1995 (VHS version in box 3)

## VHS

**Box 3**

Heidi Van Arnem Foundation, 1995 (tape no. 1)  
 Heidi Van Arnem Foundation, 1995 (non-broadcast version) (tape no. 2)  
 EHMS Wheelchair for a Day, 03/04/1996 (tape no. 3)  
 Dateline Detroit, 04/13/1996 (tape no. 4)  
 Five Inspiring Women, Detroit Channel 4, 1996 (tape no. 5)  
 From the Inside Heidi Van Arnem, 1996 (tape no. 6)  
 TV 4 News, 01/26/1997 (tape no. 7)  
 Van Arnem Travel, First Business, 04/24/1997 (tape no. 8)  
 Detroit TV News Clips, undated (includes story about wheelchair-accessible Grand Prix auto races, ca. 1997)(tape no. 9)  
 Spend a Day in a Wheelchair, 1998 (tape no. 10)  
 Wyndham's Women on Their Way Awards, 2000 (tape no. 11)  
 Top Women on the Web, 2000 (tape no. 12)  
 I-Can.com on Fox 2 News, Detroit, 06/16/2001 (tape no. 13)  
 Television news coverage of Heidi's Death, 11/01/2001 (tape no. 25)  
 Heidi Van Arnem, iCan! Inc., Entrepreneur of the Year, 2001 (tape no. 14)  
 Stevie Wonder, 2001 (Heidi interviews Stevie Wonder) (tape no. 15)  
 Office Depot Visionary Award Winners, 2002 (tape no. 16)  
 Karen Colvin, October 2002 (tape no. 17)  
 Unidentified Heidi Van Arnem Foundation event  
     Opening speaker, dining room scenes, ribbon tying (tape no. 18)  
     Karen and Chris's speeches, award presentation (tape no. 19)  
     Raffle, end of program (tape no. 20)  
     VIP Reception (tape no. 21)  
 Senior Travel, undated (tape no. 22)  
 Disabilities Today MABED Awards, undated (tape no. 23)  
 Blue Chip Interview, undated (tape no. 24)