

March 3 1971

Dear Thorne+

I had a rather early call this morning from Mrs. Marie de Forest, wife of the late Doctor Lee deF. (Have met her several times. The last time we had invited her as guest to the meeting of our So. Cal Chapter in Long Beach at which we christened the name of the chapter in honor of her late husband).

I can not say that I will be entirely rational about my report as it was somewhat difficult for me to grasp her intended thoughts as she tried to express herself. Anyway, it appears that she had met with Directors of the Stanford Museum for Electronics the day before. I think she was donating some of the Doctors records or artifacts to the museum but as I drew the inference, the Directors were not so sympathetic or bluntly "sold" on the fact that Dr. de Forest had made any great contribution to the Wireless. She felt he had and I feel I have to concur with her that he was certainly one of the moving forces in the communication fields during the early days with UWT etc. I don't think there is much question but that others used the good Doctor or exploited him but it doesn't alter the fact that he has many inventions to his credit and must be reckoned as one of the great Americans in early electronics.

I assume that the Directors may wish to give more credit to perhaps those in other fields of electronics even at a much later date. I seem to recall that Henry Dickow was somewhat bitter about a book that Jane Morgan (?) wrote in which she only mentioned those from the Bay Area, excluding many he thought were more worthy of inclusion.

I don't know what she expected me to do, expect to lend moral support, in my opinion that her husband



did make important contributions, in addition to his vacuum tube, to communication circuitry and systems used.

I mentioned that you were well posted on much of the technical aspect of his inventions, back-ground etc., and I felt that perhaps you could lend some assistance in authenticating the worth of his contributions to the art.

I think that she has met Ralph Heintz and son and has high regard for them. I presume they may have important connections with this museum.

I am somewhat in the dark about the program - her reason for being in Palo Alto, unless as I might surmise, they have opened a new wing and she felt it should be dedicated to Doctor Lee de Forest, and perhaps the Directors favored some one else? It is rather moot and perhaps on the hypothetical side for me to write at much length on something I am so ill informed upon, but she seemed to think I should know the answers - which frankly I do not.

I am wondering if by now, you have had a call from her? I did take the liberty, as mentioned to furnish your name and address, feeling that you might be able to give her some information, while at the same time, becoming acquainted with her. She is quite well known and is certainly trying to carry the banner to get her late husband the laurels and distinction or recognition she feels should be written in the history books about him.

We have invited her to attend our Long Beach meeting scheduled for April 25th at Bixby Park and she indicated she would try and attend. I understand she went to New York fairly recently to attend a meeting of the deForest Pioneers.

I would be interested in hearing anything futher on this. Meanwhile my best wishes and regards, as always -

Cordially



Saratoga, Calif. 95070  
March 8 th 1971

Dear Bill:-

I am up today for the first time from a session with the Flu, but it is over and in a couple of days will be back to normal.

Thanks for your letter concerning Mrs. DeForest, she hasn't contacted me yet but am glad to know that she might. I have met her a couple of times at meetings at the Foothill College Museum. Was there last week and heard that she was in town.

Some time ago she donated all of DeForest's personal papers to the Museum and has been up here the past 2 weeks going thru them to select the ones she wants to keep as they have been in storage for a long time but now are unpacked in the Museum being catalogued.

I attended the Jan. meeting of the Board of Directors of the Museum as I am on the Advisory Board and wanted to meet them. They are active or retired industrialists from the peninsula and most of them have a good background in the history of the Electronics industry.

I agree with you that we should give DeForest credit for the patent of the 3 element tube but I am convinced that this was discovered by accident and he made little use of it later from a technical standpoint. I also agree that the method used by A.T.&T. in getting patent rights for \$50,000. were not very ethical but if we consider the period up thru 1916, I feel that he used other people more than they used him. He was fired from the Am. DeForest Co. late in 1906 before United Wireless was formed. In 1907 he formed the DeForest Wireless Telephone Co. and because of misrepresentation and stock selling fraud, would have been sent to Federal Prison with the other top officers of his Co. if his technical friends in the I.R.E. hadn't interceded for him and got him off.

The research I did on United Wireless which also covered part of the Am. DeForest Co. indicated that DeForest was out with the fraudulent promoters most of the time while Harry Shoemaker who became the Chief Eng. of United was at home designing the needed equipment for which DeForest got the credit. This story came from technical people who worked with him and from engineers I knew in Gen. Elect. who had no ax to grind but were close to him in technical meetings etc. I will discuss more in detail when I see you.

Just had a letter from Bruce Kelley who said the material on United should be out here in 2 weeks. I am leaving for a couple of weeks in Ariz. but expect to return by the 26-27 and will phone you and bring the data up to Santa Rosa as have some work to do with Earl Wohler at the same time.

Bill, I have no idea why Mrs. DeForest called but will let you know as soon as I hear anything.

Sincerely,

*Shorn*



DEDICATED—to the men who "went down to sea in ships" as Wireless Telegraphers and  
all those who have earned their living "pounding brass" as wireless or radio ops  
since the day of Marconi.

