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November 10, 1974

Mr. W.A.Breniman,
P.O.Box 530,
Santa Rosa, Calif.

Dear Bill:-

I have reviewed the advanced copy of SPARKS and it is excellent. I do not see how you are able to turn out time after time such outstanding material. Thanks very much for printing my comments on the Federal story.

Bill I want you to have the facts but after reading the enclosed letter to me from Lloyd Espenschied, file it away and forget it along with what I am going to say. Lee DeForest was a very likeable person and I can see why Henry Dickow and Willits feel as they do about him but he was a liar and he didnot give others credit for what they accomplished.

Marie DeForest during one of her visits to the Museum told the archevist at the Museum how the great A.T.&T. Co. had cheated her husband out of his patents so I wrote LLOYD Espenschied and asked him for the facts. Lloyd was one of the top men in the Murry-Hill laboratories of A.T. & T., a member of Wireless Pioneers so you have the copy of Whos-Who that he sent in. He is highly respected by all of the electronisc engineers I have met and there is no question of the honesty of his statements. His letter to me was written after he had lost the sight of one eye and could hardly see with the other which explains the poor writing.

I have talked to a number of engineers who worked with DeForest or were associated with him and have yet to find one who respected him for his ability or knowledge of electronics. I knew Bill White of the G.E. Research Lab. very well and shortly before he died, he had been retired 10 years then, I visited him at his home and asked him for his feelings about DeForest. He said that in his opinion DeForest didnot understand the audion that Armstrong was the man who really brought out what it would do. Also that altho DeForest got his patent in 1906, he made no contribution to improving it until 1911-1912 when two good engineers were assigned to work on it in the Federal Telegraph labs in Palo Alto. Logwood and Van Etten did the work that won for DeForest the patent.

There is no point at this time in trying to set the record straight but I did want you to have the true story that he was well paid by A.T. & T. for his patents and that they did take care of him in his later years.

The story on the Alexanderson alternators is almost complete except for a few details regarding European installations and have written the historian of the British Marconi for them. Hedley Morris recently sent me several pictures and already have some 8" X 10" glossy prints from G.E.

My U.S. call books give the information on when the big sets were install. ed in the U.S. but have used my Citizens books for the foreign stations. Mine go thru 1926 and all give foreign stations in the back. The last Netbul said Earl Wohler had given u Citizens books for 1927-28-29-32. If these books do give foreign stations, I would like to borrow them long enough to Xerox the Coml. foreign calls.

The State library in Sacramento has an index starting 1905 of items in Bay Area newspapers. Under Wireless, they have over 500 reference cards and I plan to go up soon to copy appropriate references then look at the microfilm copies of the papers at Stanford, get the data and go ahead with completing the histories of the wireless companies started in Sparks #2.

Hope u and Ruth are well and dont forget to take that vacation also come down for a visit.

Best 73s,

Thorn

LLOYD ESPENSCHIED
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KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415

9 August '12

Mr. Thora L. Mayes

Dear Thora;

Your good letter of the 12th has been read to me by my dear wife.

You say I need not answer, but then raise a serious question about the treatment of deForest by the AT & T Co. & I will scribe these lines in the hope you can read them. No, my sight has not improved, anything but! My one criticism of your Marconi Co article is that it leaves the impression of a lily-white concern, whereas it was anything but such.

I am surprised that librarians should have thought deForest had been short-changed by the phone company. One might think so from Lee's book "Father of Radio". That book is full of misinformation. DeForest and his Radio Telephone Co. was paid a total of some \$^{500,000}~~800,000~~ for his patents, as I recall (in three parts). Ample payment for the then value of a bunch of questionable patents! In his later life I tried to get deForest himself to set this but he never corrected the fairy-tales of his book. My correspondence with him is in binders now part of my technical papers given the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

DeForest was promoting a Diathermy business when World War II broke for the U.S.A., which closed up the business and left him stopped. It was rumored among his friends that he was ill and in danger of dying, impoverished. That would have been a sorry spectacle as against the blaze of glory electronics had attained (a billion dollar new industry). I went to my superiors in Bell Labs and presented that picture with the suggestion that the company do something to help Lee. He was then (about ^{1948?} 1950?) put on the company payroll as a consultant. He was required only to give the company first crack at any invention he might make

(and ~~none was~~ of any account). His compensation was about \$10,000 a year, rising to \$15,000 in the period before his death, as I recall. Not bad treatment for one who had been making false statements! If you get to the Smithsonian in September look up my deForest papers.

Cordially, Lloyd E.

Copy to Gerald Tyne; - also Mr. Finn, Smithsonian