

24th February 1961  
C.S.I.R.O.  
Stowell Ave.  
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Mr. E. K. Gannett  
Institute of Radio Engineers  
1 East 79th Street  
New York 21, New York

Dear Mr. Gannett:

A couple of months ago I sent to you a note entitled "High Gain Triode of Forty Years Ago". After you returned it, I sent the material to E. L. Steele, who is editor of Transactions on Electron Devices. His recommendation was that it be submitted as a note in your column. Presently, I believe the manuscript is in the custody of Jennie Ewanowski of Research Corporation in N.Y.C. At this distance, there is little more I can do on the matter. If you wish to have a try at pruning the manuscript, it may be secured from her.

The purpose of this letter is not to belabor the above, but rather to discuss another matter. The December issue of Proc. IRE carried a note of mine about "Wide Band Amplifiers of Forty Years Ago". Not only did Edwin Dallin step forward as the designer of the Acme units, but over a dozen other people wrote to me and more letters seem to be on their way. The curious thing about these letters is that over half of the writers had nothing to add to the subject in hand. They did have a variety of comments about other old gear, people, companies, etc. Some of the signatures were prominent in radio during the 1920's. A rather similar thing happened a year ago on my note about "Negative Feedback a Third of a Century Ago". Apparently, the present complexion of the Proceedings has rather passed up an increasing number of people. Some of these write to me just to get a matter off their chest or to find a kindred spirit. A couple of writers seem to be working on histories of communication. Professorial chairs have been opened in History of Science at several universities; a notable one being held by Derek Price at Yale.

What has been going thru my mind is the possibility of setting up a professional group on History of Radio. Therein the interested people could describe equipment, companies, people, experiments and experiences during the early growth of the art. Some care would be needed not to rehash old animosities which were fortunately absent in the letters I received.

My own interest is mainly to run modern performance tests on old gear. Before 1925, very little quantitative information will be found in any of the published literature. This is mainly because there was practically no test equipment, much less intelligent procedures. Most performance tests were made by connecting the apparatus to the antenna and giving it a try. If communication could be established; then the

apparatus worked. For instance; the Marconi magnetic detector was popular about fifty years ago and several are still in existence. However, I have a hunch that no quantitative tests were ever made on this device. There are many other possibilities.

Perhaps you could give the matter some thought, discuss it with others and maybe bring it up at board meeting.

Presently I am organizing some radio astronomy experiments in this part of the world. The work will be at the lower frequencies which are becoming available as we approach solar activity minimum.

Curiously enough the oldest practitioner of radio astronomy seems to be Thomas A. Edison. He made a setup to try to find Hertzian waves from the sun in 1890; only three years after Hertz's original experiments in the laboratory!

I am,

Sincerely yours,

*Grote Reber*  
Grote Reber

people, experiments and experiences during the early growth of the radio art. Some care would be needed not to repeat old mistakes which were fortunately absent in the letters received.

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