

April 19, 1950

-----  
Temporary mailing address:

A. J. Stimson  
Nine Mile Falls, Wash

James L. Kearns  
Portland, Ore

Dear Mr. Kearns:

As discussed at the hotel the other day, I submit a brief outline of my background in the electronic field as well as other comments pertinent to our proposed association.

Having had a chance to digest your catalog, I must digress to say that you represent an outstanding array of most interesting equipment. It seems to me that any laboratory or industrial could find profitable use for many of the items; of course, it would take missionary work and much application to put it over, but you are to be commended on the selection you have made.

I started in the electronic business in about 1916, though, of course, electronics as such were unknown then. It had been my intention to be an x-ray engineer, but the new radio baby looked more attractive, and I put all my efforts that way. Between this time and about 1918 I built radio equipment for the old Doerr-Mitchell Company of Spokane and dabbled in various phases of the work until Wasmer brought KHQ to Spokane, at which time I went to work with him on maintenance and as operator of the transmitter. This continued for a few years, but he was in bad financial way then, and being unable to pay me I was obliged to go elsewhere for an income, and entered free-lance engineering on radio and electronic control device design. This carried me up to about 1925 when I dropped engineering and took a fling at aviation. From aerial mapping and photographic work for the U. S. Forest Service I eased into the business of having a motion picture laboratory, making industrial films and some animated scientific educational matter. We then moved to Seattle about 1928, and I built a sound-on-film recorder for the Olympic Studios over there. When that was finished I went to work as Chief Engineer for the Electrophone Corporation in the design of wire-recording equipment. However, this company got caught in the depression and had to fold, so I was again out of that.

My experimental work on the wire recording led to the eventual design of an amplified guitar (which, incidentally, was the first made) and this design I took to Los Angeles to the Dobro Company where I was gently axed out of the picture. While in Los Angeles I built a double transcription recorder for the R. U. MacIntosh Associates, then moved back to Spokane, and opened the Stimson Laboratories designing and manufacturing

(James L Kearns - Stimson 2)

Sound Equipment, Police Radio Apparatus and Electronic Devices. We installed the equipment in the majority of theatres thruout this territory at that time, and many large centralized sound systems in schools thruout Washington, Idaho and Montana. Incidentally, one of our installations at the Willis Sweet Hall, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho still stands as one of the largest.

About 1937 (the competition in this line having become murderous) I left the business, and, with the war becoming imminent, ended at the Boeing Company in Seattle as one of the three electronic engineers. Later, I was transferred to the Instrument Division where I designed and built test equipment. After completion of this work, I was transferred back to Engineering, and while here was one of the three electronic engineers picked up for Massachusetts Institute of Technology to work on radar, and went there as Research Associate, later being promoted to Member of the Staff. As I told you in our discussion, this eventually became very unbearable and I moved to the Bendix-Westinghouse Company of Elyria, Ohio as Chief Electronic Engineer in the design of Compressed Air Loudspeaking Equipment and Systems. Due to the fact that the climate brought on sinus trouble to my children, I was obliged to move the family from that Cleveland area, and back to Spokane where I returned some six months later to set up a laboratory and shop at the Nine Mile location where I did subcontracting from the Pacific Electronics for the Naval Research Laboratory and other scientific branches. Some time later I went to work for Pacific Electronics as Chief Engineer, and remained there until the end of the war brought closing of the Spokane branch. Since then I have been engaged in this business of Instrument Making and Repair.

So, this brings me up to date with quite a broad field of experience behind me. There are many things, of course, that I am not familiar with in your equipment, but, on the other hand, I have designed and used apparatus that is associated with all of it, and believe that my experience would enable me to help a customer in selection of what he needs as well as being able to point out how he could use items with which he was unfamiliar.

It looks as though the matter of getting a down-town headquarters is going to be difficult. I must be careful, and not blindly move in someplace just to get a headquarters; also, the matter of getting help is very discouraging. I couldn't afford to have help that would not be interested in maintaining the same quality and service that I am trying to establish. Under my present setup I could make occasional trips into the territory, and could make any special call. I can also arrange for stenographic service (I have a dictaphone) to handle my correspondence. It may be, of course, that I could eventually get desirable help and establish my own location in town, but that is a factor that depends upon the growth of my business, and - more important - my net profit from the business. It is expanding greatly, and whether it will soon reach saturation is something I don't know.

I shall be anxious to hear from you with your comments on all of the above.

Sincerely,