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SAN FRANCISCO

A. W. Benesford

Benesford

April 22, 1926

G. T. Carpenter, Esquire,
American Institute of Electrical Engineers,
33 West 39th Street,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Carpenter:

I am in receipt of yours of the 14th inst., with reference to biographical sketch for publication in the Journal, and have a very distinct memory of Mr. McNichols' letter of July 15th last year making the same request for cooperation. I have had it before me and have picked it up on a number of occasions, but have been somewhat at loss as to how to reply. This uncertainty has not been lessened by the constant appearance in the Journal of the biographical sketches of my predecessors, all of whom seem to have been connected with the fundamental development of some of the underlying branches of electrical engineering and to have been personally responsible for definite advances therein. The lack of spectacular features in my own experience contrasted sharply with theirs, my real field having been along management lines, although a definite engineering content was essential to their management.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1872, and after the public grade school as they then existed, entered the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, from which I graduated in 1892, and then the senior class of Cornell University, graduating in 1893. Education in electrical engineering in those days was not on its present basis. Purely as a matter of comment, I remember that the only power apparatus with which we had to work at the Polytechnic was a 1/6 H.P. Crocker-Wheeler motor and the only direct reading instruments Cornell University possessed were one Weston 110 V. voltmeter and one Weston 100 ampere ammeter. For current measurements we used either a Thompson balance or an iron brick hung on the end of about 2 ft. of wire, the wire being attached to a pivoted mirror, the deflected beam of light being read on the scale.

From 1893 to 1896 I engaged in the usual variety of occupation possible in panic years to a college graduate without experience. You will remember that 1893 was a period of depression and in addition the formation of the General Electric Co. had resulted in throwing on the market a number of what were then trained and experienced engineers, some of whom had been enjoying the munificent compensation (for those days) of \$5000 a year. A new graduate had little chance. These occupations ranged from laborer in car barns of the Brooklyn City Railway Co., overhauling motors, and ground hand on trolley line construction, through drafting and wiring and installation work to amateur sales effort and invention.

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G.T.Carpenter, Esquire--2.

In 1896 I took charge of the Ward-Leonard Electric Co.'s testing and design work and from then until 1923 was closely identified with the field of electric motor control.

In 1898, in company with two associates, I bought over the defunct Iron Clad Rheostat Co., called it the Iron Clad Resistance Co. and at the end of two years' operation sold it to The Cutler-Hammer Mfg. Co., entering the Engineering Department of the latter concern in 1900. I was successively superintendent, general manager and vice president over a period of 23 years.

I made no great personal contribution to the art, but picked and operated a great many men who did. I think the work done was important, beginning, as it did, with the real inception of motor application to industry in general and continuing practically up to the present. During this period we evolved the intricate devices which made possible the modern steel mill and its production record, the hoisting and conveying machinery so universally employed, the electrically operated printing press, the modern electric elevator - each a special control problem requiring engineering of high order, and in the solution of all of which The Cutler-Hammer Mfg. Co. held no minor position.

I was Chairman of the General War Service Committee of the Electrical Manufacturing Industry during the war and am Past President of Electrical Manufacturers Club and of the Associated Manufacturers of Electrical Supplies. I have been honored with the usual series of offices in each of these, as well as in the Institute.

I am now in the field of electric refrigeration, as Executive Vice President of this corporation, one of the three units recently merged to form Electric Refrigeration Corporation.

All of the above is more or less reminiscent, but additional facts and dates are in Who's Who, and if you can make a presentation of the whole adequate for the purposes of the Journal, I will thank you for doing a job which I cannot do myself.

Sincerely yours,

A.W. Berresford

A.W.Berresford

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