



The William P. and Moya Olsen Lear Papers

The Museum of Flight
Seattle, Washington

**[Recording from Cordell Damron to William P. Lear
regarding invention ideas]**

Date: December 30, 1965

Location: Pikeville, Kentucky

Abstract:

This audio recording contains a message from Cordell Damron to William P. Lear regarding Damron's invention ideas, recorded on December 30, 1965. Damron, a manager of an electronics store in Pikeville, Kentucky, discusses a number of inventions he hopes to develop and describes his frustration in securing patents, funding, and employment with large corporations such as RCA and GE. He notes that he is now contacting Lear for advice and possible employment. Damron's invention ideas include an aircraft landing device, an underwater communication device, an underwater mining device, a new process for rocket fuel, and a control device for model airplanes. He also states that he pioneered the use of prism technology, later used by Bell Laboratories to develop the laser, and that he invented the reflecting-type plumb bob and rear-vision periscope.

Restrictions:

Permission to publish material from the William P. and Moya Olsen Lear Papers must be obtained from The Museum of Flight Archives.

Transcript:

Transcribed by Pioneer Transcription Services. Reviewed by TMOF volunteers and staff.

[Recording from Cordell Damron to William P. Lear regarding invention ideas]

[START OF RECORDING]

00:00:00

[sound of recorder being adjusted]

CORDELL DAMRON: This tape recording made at Pikeville, Kentucky, December the 30th, 1965, and addressed to Mr. William P. Lear, the Learjet Corporation, Wichita, Kansas. Dear Mr. Lear: A few things I want to talk to you about. First, I want to congratulate you on your idea of a two-engine single-prop airplane, so if one engine quits, you can automatically switch it over to the next engine for safety for a light aircraft. I think it's a great idea. I think it can be done, and I think you'll do it.

But what I want to talk to you about, Mr. Lear, I'm working on a cheap aircraft landing device to be used for small airports and emergency landing fields like the Army, Navy, Marines, and so forth. Radars cost millions, and my landing system will only cost a few hundred dollars per unit. Now, these will operate on the principle of the oscilloscope like we use in electronical laboratory. There will be a bunch of cables going around the traffic pattern out on these runways in a traffic pattern, and these cables, we will hook to a set of infrared detectors. And these detectors will be pointed up in the air at different angles. And now these cables will be hooked to a control system, and the master control system on the vertical and horizontal tabs of the plane oscilloscopes. When an airplane approaches a runway, it'll show on the oscilloscope just where and what location the aircraft is coming into the landing system. In other words, if he's too high, too low, too far to the right, too far to the left, why, they'll be up a schematic or a diagram, a map on the face of the oscilloscope, and you can talk a pilot right on down, tell him he's too low, too high, too far to the left, and so forth. Now, this will be a very simple device and only cost a few hundred dollars. Now, why I don't go ahead with it, I just don't have the money to go ahead with it.

Another thing I'm doing some research and done some work on is an underwater communication device. If you remember when the aircraft [unintelligible] went down, we didn't have any way of communicating with those boys if they got underwater. And if we'd had my device, we could have communicated with the [unintelligible] until the last second of destruction, even if he's at ocean bottom, 12,000 or 15,000, 20,000 feet. Also, this device could be used as a detection-finding device for enemy submarines or for communication device for exact fixes and so forth.

In other words, there will be a high-powered magnet installed on each sub or each station. As you might know, Westinghouse come out with a superconductive magnet that

operated in liquid helium that's 200,000 times the magnetic field strength of the ears. We could take this same type of magnet or something on the same order and modulate the field strength to these magnets. And we could have a station set up, we'll say, for an example, at Labrador, one at the Keys of Florida, one in Washington. And we—by modulating these magnetic fields sent through this powerful magnet, we could work a meter or a homing device and Washington to Labrador to Florida Keys, and we could set up a communication device. We could communicate from the ocean bottom. Also, we could use it as a fix. If we beamed on Labrador, beamed on Washington, beamed on the Florida Keys, for an example, we could come up with an exact fix, and we could almost drop a baseball right down on top of a sub regardless of where he was at. We could have almost the exact feet in a bottom. And also, it could be used as a communication device in this order or it could be used as a detection device for enemy subs and so forth. Now, I've done a lot of work on this and just about read it—ready for some actual working models or research. But like I said before, I do not have the money.

Another thing I have some theory and have done a lot of research on, they claim that there's millions and billions of dollars' worth of precious minerals on the ocean bottom, if we had any way to collect them. I think this can be done and will be done by a—set up a collecting electrodes. Something on a similar—on the order of the old-fashioned electroplating devices that would be low voltage, low frequency, and high current. And by dropping a set of electrodes down in the ocean bottom and letting these collect—electrodes collect precious minerals and then pulling these electrodes out and scraping it off or dropping the minerals off of them and going back and getting another load, I think this can be done and will be done in the near future. Would like to do a lot of research on this, but like all the other things, I do not have the money.

Another thing I've got some ideas and got some theory on, too: we talk about it—

[telephone rings]

[recording stops and resumes]

CD: —we've been a fool with those rocket engines and all that stuff and the liquid fuel and solid fuel for pellets and so forth. And we haven't made—actually made any great gain since the Chinese back in the 14th century made those sky rockets. We're still on the same old track. And I believe by taking certain gasses and running streams of electrons at different frequencies, we can break the molecules up, certain gasses down and give it more lift. Now, this has proven that my theory—I've been corresponding some with the Air Force. I didn't tell them all I'd done and they didn't tell me all they'd done, but they said that absolutely it's possible that I'm on the right track, but the research they have done on it hasn't proved successful because they haven't got enough lift for the amount

of stuff they had to put in. But I think it can be done and will be done in the near future. And like I said before, I don't have the money to go ahead with them.

Another thing I have drawn out and ready to file a patent on: this model aircraft industry is a billion-dollar industry per year. And the reason why that there's not more of those toy gasoline-engine-driven small airplanes on the market and so they are because the average man can't fly them. He builds one. He works all winter on one. He builds one, takes it out and tries to fly it, and the first time he flies it, why, he wrecks it and it tears it up and he's out of the thing. But I have come up with a mechanical device that I can set on the outside of the flying circle and take one lever and crank the airplane up myself and shove it off. Then I can sit there and make that airplane do anything in the book. Loop it, spin it, and do all the die-dos, all the acrobatics, by just controlling one lever.

Now, there's several patents on the market. I had the patent office researched and got all the copies, all the recent patents. And now I have the most economical, the most simplest device. But they want about 1,200, 1,500 dollars to go ahead the patent. I don't have the money, like I told you before. There's several things like this I have in mind that I've got to get it off my chest. I've got to get—talk to someone. And I have been informed that Mr. Bill Lear, the Lear Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas, was a guy who would listen to a guy like myself. I don't have any money. I'm a manager of an electronical store here in Pikeville. I make around 90 to 100 dollars per week. And I just don't have the money. I don't have the time unless I can get some financial help, I'll get employment with some large corporation somewhere that will give me a helping hand that will listen.

Probably you already knew this or have heard about it or read about it or something. And as far back as August the 16th, 1947, I was in the photographic business. I've been in the photographic business and electronics all my life. I was operating a photographic studio here in Pikeville, Kentucky when this color film come out, this inside color and outside color. And I was trying to come up with some type of light Kelvins to change the frequency of light so I could use the inside color outside or the outside color inside or vice versa. And I was trying to make a spotlight so I could make this high-priced fancy color portraits. And I come up and I finally come out by taking a large 12-inch wheel and putting a bunch of prisms on that wheel and shining lights through those prism and polarizing that light that I could do wonders. And I could even melt the paint off a wall or I could melt leaves out of the tree.

I knew I had something. I didn't have the money at that time, like I said before. I didn't know what to do with it. So I wrote to the War Department on August the 16th, 1947, and I sent them a complete schematic or a blueprint of the whole thing. I wrote them a full-fledged letter and tell him what I'd found out, what it would do. And I even specified in that letter that I believed the time had come where we could burn an airplane out of the

sky. You could use it for communication. Or it might even cure cancer. They didn't give me any consideration whatsoever.

The thing that went ahead—and I didn't file a patent on it—went on for years and years until 1958 to Bell Research Laboratories filed patent on the thing, and they called it a laser [unintelligible]. And using my same principle, all they'd done is taken one prism and bore a hole through it, which I didn't have no way to bore a hole through a glass prism—so they rotated that glass and polarized that light, and by turning that prism at several thousand RPMs a minute, they started on the laser beam that we call now. They still won't give me any consideration. Several people knows about it. They wouldn't even recognize me whatsoever. They won't even talk to me about it no more. And they give all these other guys all the credits and all the awards. But beyond any reasonable doubt, I am the man that broke the ice in the lasers field as far back as August the 16th, 1947. That is the time I sent to the government, and I was working on it two years before. But they will not—they have not given me any consideration whatsoever. And some of these other things, I don't want to get too far out of hand till I get somewhat like you or somebody that will listen to me, give a poor man a working chance.

I'm the inventor of the reflecting-type plumb bob used for mining engineers. That's another thing I lost money on. And I am the inventor of the rear-vision periscope. And another thing I had done when World War II was going along, I'm one of the guys that suggested dropping out tinfoil so the enemy radar would pick it up. And they used that. I understand a few people sent it in, but I was one. And I do—I think I have—still have the little gold certificate they sent me for that time.

Now, the reason, Mr. Lear, I'm talking to you, I have been informed that you was a hard-working, upstanding man that would give a poor man like myself a chance. Now, you might wonder why that I'm not connected with some large corporation like RCA, GE, or something like that. Now, this is how they look at it. I'm just a poor old country boy raised in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Never had a chance to go to a day of college in my life. I can write some of these companies or they hear about me and they'll send their long application blank to fill out. They're very interested. Then when I fill out the application blank, over on the back, it'd be about three or four pages, what degrees do you hold? What college did you attend? What years? Bachelor of Science, electrical engineering, or whatever it is. And I don't have that to put. So they turn me down on that case. So then they'll send their little suggestion booklet, want me to put down my suggestions and send it in to them for consideration. I don't believe in suggestion booklets. All I want's a reasonable chance. I want a chance to try to do something in life.

And like I said before, I don't have the money to go ahead with these things. And I hate to sit around here and let somebody beat me out of them or come up later years and say,

“Well, I had that. I just didn’t have the money.” So I read a lot about you, and I’ve heard a lot about you. And I understand yourself at one time was just about in my shape, back in the years gone by. And Mr. Lear, I’ll appreciate it if you have any suggestion or anything you could help me with or anything you’d do for me, it’ll be highly appreciated. If you have an opening in your laboratory where you could use a man of my standing, of my education, of my ability, and paid me enough to come out there to work, I’d appreciate it. If you can’t do that, if you have any suggestions that you might give me or any legal advice, I’d sure appreciate it.

Now, I’m taking this up with you first. The last little while, I thought I must do something about these things, and then I thought I’d give you the first opportunity on it. So you think it over. Let me know what you think. Now, first, I’ll tell you something about myself a little. I’m 58 years old, married, and my children has all grown. I’ve got one boy working with the Space Program. And nobody home but me and my wife. And as far as I know, my health is good. And I weigh about 195 pounds. Broke and no money, but got the guts to try anything.

So I’ll take your advice and appreciate it if you’d write me a nice letter or make me a tape recording and send it down to me, and then I’ll make the further steps. So thank you a lot. Appreciate you listening to my little story. If there’s anything you want to find out about me, you want to run a security check or anything you want to find out about me, why, you have my permission to do so. We live in a small town here, Pikeville, Kentucky. I live out in the country on one of these country farms out here. And Pikeville is about a 5,000-population little town. We don’t have a sufficient library here to look up any information. We don’t have any research laboratory in this valley. So, you see, my hands is tied. And I can’t get away to go to no research laboratory to make any research. And we don’t have any library to try to look up nothing. So I’m stuck here in the mountains, and I’m asking for help.

So thank you a lot for listening to this recording. Anything I can tell you that you want to know about me or ask me, or you can run a security check on me if you want to. So thank you a lot and appreciate you listening to this tape. Signed, Cordell Damron. C-O-R-D-E-L-L, Cordell, Damron, D-A-M-R-O-N. Pikeville, Kentucky. Resident telephone number: [telephone number]. The office telephone is [telephone number], Pikeville, Kentucky. So thanks a lot. Appreciate you listening to this recording.

And PS, in case you’re a ham radio operator—I listen around in there on the ham radio bands. I’m a ham radio operator. I build my own equipment. And I operate K4BG and a Q, King, 4, Baker, George, Queen, Pikeville, Kentucky, at 1KW on most all ham bands. Thank you and good afternoon.

00:16:31

[END OF RECORDING]