

**(Letters from the records of)  
NAVY DEPARTMENT  
Office of Naval Intelligence**

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1901 Eighteenth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
August 16, 19[18]

Mr. Wright, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Department of Justice  
[Vermont Avenue & K Sts. NW  
Washington, D.C.]

Dear Sir:

I will gladly give you any information I have along any line needed by Uncle Sam. From time to time I gathered information from such sources as Gathesson [?] only by “leading them on” by seeming to “fall in” with their ideas . . . and, as my associates will tell you, I had considerable information about the war that was accurate.

But there is another matter in my mind, namely, my war inventions ought to be got ready at once, so we may more quickly break through the next line of German defenses which is no doubt being prepared by them behind their present war-front, & so we may be better able to meet & wipe out the German Fleet, which is a menace, & so we may be better able to

[The remainder of this letter is missing.]

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1901 Eighteenth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
August 18, 1918.

Mr. Wright  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Department of Justice  
Vermont Avenue & K St. N.W.  
City [Washington, D.C.]

Dear Sir:--You asked me why I had not taken up my war inventions directly with the government. My attempt and utmost desire has been to do so, but I wanted to do it by means of a previous demonstration with private capital, else my claims would hardly be believed and my proposition would be side-tracked and delayed and pigeonholed, and my secret would be disclosed to those who may be too much interested in methods which my devices will “knock out” or to those who may be spies of the Prussian Military System. I admit that there is less danger NOW than hitherto because, let us hope, most of those who are not true patriots have been weeded out. Besides I was and am “tied up” with money obligations which private capital might pay but which the Govt might not, —and I wished to get FREE before presenting my devices to the Govt and I wished to present a DEMONSTRATED RESULT instead of paper explanations. One of those to whom I owe money has a son who would like to own his father’s interests, and whilst he is loyal to Great Britain some of my friends feared he might like to do me damage in order to discredit me with the father, and whilst these suspicions were no doubt unfounded, it made me uneasy and only enhanced my desire to get FREE and get the private capital with which to SHOW what I have got that the Govt needs:

I think I have a submarine torpedo, long-distance, mammoth-charge, invisible-to-the-enemy, which will place the sea under the control of even a small fleet of the Allies; a small fleet of cruisers will be able to sink the German Fleet and take possession of the German coast, and the whole “Potsdam crew”;

I think I have aerial-guidable, self-propelling projectiles which will be better than big guns, longer range, more accurate, lighter, for warfare on sea or land, and which would enable a small detachment of Pershing’s Forces to march straight to Berlin;

I think I have an anti-aircraft guidable projectile which will blot the German warplane out of the skies & take that stain out of the heavens, and do it more quickly and cheaply than by opposing to Germany aeroplanes of our own. If I can be sure that I am not disclosing my hard-won secrets (upon which I hope to base a completely adequate National Defense for the U.S.) to persons who are secretly the agents of the big munitions makers whom I would knock out or agents of Germany, I will disclose my secrets to Uncle Sam if I could first, with private capital, show him what I actually have, so the question as to whether it will “work” or not will not delay or endanger the secrecy of my method—secrets which should be known to the fewest possible number of persons only and only by those actually connected with using them. We should use my second-best devices for licking Germany and keep the first-best for our National Defense until the post-bellum dangers (possibly differences between the U.S. and some of the allies!) have been taken care of. See?

With \$24,000 (at one time with \$9800) I could get FREE; and with \$60,000 to \$120,000 I could make a first and sufficient demonstration of one of the said devices and then the Govt could get them working on the front sooner and more effectively than any other method known.

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You may know the ropes better than I, for I scarcely know them at all: irrespective of said inventions I have one facility which I believe would be of use to the Govt—namely, I am inventive and original in

my mental make-up (as many have said) but I am not a business man and am apt to lose my interest in an invention or discovery as soon as I have made it. I think I can convince any competent person that I have this kind of facility. For instance, as a recent letter shows, I was the original begetter of the FOAM fire extinguishing method: it is right, but it took 15 years for the world to find it out; a dozen or more things were originally my ideas but they were TOO new to be financed at the time—later they were taken up with success. Burns & Townsend of this city, Townsend is still alive, wrote a letter saying I was one of the most original minds they knew, and many have said that, and I thought because my inventions were GOOD that I myself could make a business success, but I didn't—and the struggle would have discouraged anybody but myself, for I was buoyed up by the knowledge that I have what the world needs along the lines of METHODS OF RESEARCH, etc. I read recently that the Govt wants improvements on the Liberty Motor: I think I could be of service along that line, although my way of solving the problem might involve a different method.

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My improved method of COMBUSTION whereby I can burn Coal Paste (or only slightly more expensive crude oil) without smoke or smell, and run autos with 1/3 the present fuel cost (as compared to kerosene at 8 cents) will save fuel in many lines, and in house-heating as well, etc.

My method of using Natural Cold during several winter days for ICE MAKING, ought to interest the FOOD & FUEL Administration—natural ice from rivers and ponds is apt to be infected and has to be hauled farther than mine: for I make mine in the city; that sufficient ice can be stored for a city the natural ice companies have proved. Artificial ice companies cannot compete because of the big fuel costs. I can give Washington cheaper ice, free from germs; and I can also by another plan greatly reduce the distribution cost.

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Although several promoters are still ineffectually trying to pace the war matter, I can draw away from them, free; & with a small sum could get FREE of others. And I might get the personal money from my Ice Proposition or my Combustion Proposition and then I would be FREE of obligations involving war inventions, and if I could make enough money to demonstrate my war inventions myself and if after seeing what can be done the Govt wants it, wouldn't it be great to be able to give it to my country? And there ought to be some one to help me take this step. The fact that I have been and am in debt ought not to be made into a stigma against me.

Very truly  
Elmer Gates

[The above paragraphs were typewritten. This hand-written paragraph follows.]

I am entirely sure that I could really be an effective help to U.S. as an inventor in mechanical, electrical, chemical, thermodynamic, etc. lines. I have no college degree, but I know physics—practically, mechanically—& did great work (yet unpublished) in discovery while I had a laboratory (as I came[?] from).

If my war devices are to be taken up at all it should be now, so as to get ready to take Germany next April or never.

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(Julius Pirnitzeri was President of the Transatlantic Trust Company. This letter was found in the company's records.)

For you and Mr. Pirnitzeri only.

The  
TRANSPORTATION CLUB  
New York.

Saturday.  
(August 24, 1918)

Dear Mr. [Julius] Pirnitzeri:-

I am favorably impressed with Mr. Rintelen, and would give him my full confidence, and I wish that on his "say so" you would enable me to get rid of my Canadian obligation and then make a demonstration of the Explosives & Guidable, as soon as possible.

There are good and sufficient reasons why I dared not disclose my secret to Dr. Frank & Prof. Brown and those others connected with Siemens & Halske Co., and I will tell them to you and Rintelin privately and in confidence at any hour and place you appoint, preferably (but not necessarily) here in my room of here at the Club. When you hear what I have to say you will agree with me, and it is important that you hear it as you will understand.

Just as I was leaving here yesterday to meet the 2 o'clock appointment with Dr. Frank I received the enclosed telegram from my attorney (please return it) and besides, there is a very important reason why I dare not disclose to Siemens & Halske— if word should reach Canada before I pay off Pitt (and Vandam) I would be unable to lift the Explosive & Guidance out of the List of War Inventions for \$9800 – I would not then be able to do it if I were to pay the whole half million or any sum, and by reason of my being at Dr. Frank's place yesterday, word may reach Canada because of one party who knew I was there—as I will explain. The success of my invention means the failure of that party's similar invention, etc.

I know what I am talking about. You are busy man; so am I; come here if you can; or both meet at your office at an early hour.

Yours truly,  
Elmer Gates

My telephone is Murray Hill 7400.

P.S. Please do not discuss this with Dr. Frank or Siemens & Halske – at least not until after you see me.