

HEADQUARTERS
525TH AIR DEFENSE GROUP
New Castle County Airport
Wilmington, Delaware

4 August 1955

Mr. William E. Thornton
Box 117
Faison, North Carolina

Dear Bill,

Received your letter detailing the scoring systems and have attempted to put your theories into practice with moderate success. I certainly appreciate such an immediate answer and your interest in this project even though you put "Mister" in front of your name nowadays.

I surely feel that it is a shame that the Air Force has lost your services because when we lose fellows like you, we senior officers, who have a definite interest in the Air Force, don't have anyone to back us up. I know, however, that whatever your future profession might be that you will continue to work for the best interests of those for whom you are working. I have certainly enjoyed the association we have had and maybe someday in the future when some damn fool starts a war, we can get together and I will have some company in all these radical ideas I have on rocket firing.

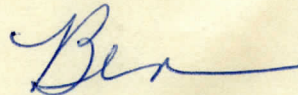
I received a letter today from Captain Meyers saying that you are being recommended for some type of award. I have answered it and agree with him that you should definitely receive some type of recognition for your development of the FEI. We have had excellent success. We have increased our hit probability from around 30 per cent to where we are now getting better than 50 per cent hits. Of course, we have had some troubles with the camera, sweep, and target pick-up, but those are to be expected of anything that is mechanical. You might be interested to know that we used your FEI on approximately 300 firing sorties and have exposed well over 1500 feet of film. We have definitely come to the conclusion that there is no standard computer or ballistic set-up, but in order to get hits consistently, each aircraft has to be considered as an individual and lined up accordingly.

We have just finished firing on our first 6 by 30 rags here at New Castle where we have been able to utilize the FEI, and we received 50 per cent hits even though we had two definite malfunctions in our RT units of our radar. Win, lose, or draw on any future rocket meet we may enter, such as the one at Yuma for the Eastern shoot-off around the middle of the month, we feel that we are pretty good. Now for the first time we have some confidence in our ability to shoot down enemy bombers.

You might be interested to know that I have been contacted by two different civilian outfits, mainly, Philco and Minneapolis Honeywell, who are interested in trying to manufacture an FEI combining the best features of yours and ours so that they might sell them to the Air Force to make a fortune. Minneapolis Honeywell seems to be very interested in your ideas and work along this line. I recommended you to them as being the man that I felt knew more about FEI in this system than anyone I knew. They seem to be very interested and indicated to me that they might approach you with some proposition so that you might be cut in on the fortune. I certainly hope they do because they seem to be extremely interested and very sure that they were going to try to sell something along this line to the Air Force. You mentioned one time that you were going to attempt to get patents on some type of FEI. If you are, I recommend you get them as soon as possible. If you are interested in working with Minneapolis Honeywell, the individual that I talked to from there was named Mr. Starky, he works out of the Research Division out in Minneapolis.

If you make a fortune, I will take a box of good cigars. Good luck to you! I will be very interested in keeping in touch with you because someday I might get a brainstorm and would like to have you unravel it for me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Ben", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.