

THE SO-CALLED HENDERSHOT MOTOR

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For more than 25 years, Lester Hendershot and "The Hendershot Motor" have appeared to be an enigma wrapped in an obscurity tied with a contradiction. They still are. Most people are surprised to learn that Lester Jennings Hendershot is alive. He is very much so. Not only is he actively alive, but at 57, he is deep in his experiments with his device - a device which has come to be erroneously known as a "motor". To call Hendershot's mechanism - or "electricism" - a "motor", only adds to the enigma. Long ago, it was termed by a most orthodox scientist, "more properly a generator than a motor". Somehow, "generator" never caught on. It has always been "The Hendershot Motor". Probably, it will remain so. In addition to generator, the arrangement may be properly called an apparatus, a system, or a device.

It seems to me it would be quite incorrect to say Hendershot deliberately created the enigma. It would also appear wrong to say he has ever done much to help clear it away! The enigma has suited Hendershot's purpose because he does not *know*, he says, *what* he has! He does not know, he says, *how* it works. Neither does he know, he says, how to duplicate it consistently, or in different sizes. "I am not one of these slide-rule boys," he told me. "I don't know how to figure these things out first. It is pretty much a "cut and try" proposition with me."

Whether Hendershot knows what he is doing or not, he has evidently created "a something" which has seemed interesting enough to others, for they are, at the present time, seeking to duplicate his accomplishments. I know of one such effort being attempted in New Jersey, another in the Bay region of California. Whether either of these will "beat Hendershot to the Patent Office" remains to be seen. Whether a patent will truly protect such a device or not is highly problematical. While it might certainly prevent large scale outside manufacturing and *sale*, it most certainly would not prevent private or individual manufacture and *use*! Of course, our patent laws do protect - in *theory* - against individual duplication of any patented article, but - in practice - it is quite impossible to accomplish such protection. Once anyone has learned how to tap a *basic* source of energy for his private use, and sets the knowledge forth in a patent - which he must do to obtain it - the world will not beat a path to *his* door, so much, as to the door of the Patent Office, for there they can learn the secret for 25¢. Sooner or later, every inventor of such a device comes to realize this fact. He is thus between two fires. Both are equally hot. Either is bound to consume him sooner or later.

This, I believe, is why so many of these systems have died with their inventors. Few men have learned - perhaps it is impossible for them to learn - that he who gives most, receives most. All of us are too close to the jungle for such thinking. However, denying a truth does not obliterate it.

What makes up a Hendershot "motor"? There are some basket-woven, flat coils of insulated wire. These, no doubt, are inductances of some sort. What is the size of the wire or how many turns of it on each "pancake" there may be, Hendershot does not say. There are some stainless steel rings - "non-magnetic" stainless steel - and some pieces of "stick carbon". There are some short lengths of "Alnico" or equivalent, permanent magnets. There may be - and probably are - some electrical condensers among this plethora of parts, but Mr. Hendershot does not say, nor are their capacities hinted at. Too, there may be other accoutrements well hidden from prying eyes. I would be surprised if there were not! It would appear there are no moving parts which deliver the power, hence the lack of any true resemblance to a motor. The device manufactures an electrical current which Mr. Hendershot told me would power either an electric motor or light an incandescent lamp. In fact, he has pictures of himself holding the device in one hand and a lighted bulb in the other. He also has pictures of the device placed on a pile of lumber, and a lighted lamp above it.

There also appears to be within this device some very critical features. For instance, as Mr. Hendershot told me, "Sometimes, I wind on too many turns of wire. Then, the thing won't work at all. I take some of the turns off. Maybe it works, and maybe not. If it works it soon burns out. That is my greatest trouble - the things burning out." One immediately wonders if it is possible the potential of the power *source* changes frequently?

What powers the Hendershot device? If Mr. Hendershot knows - even has any idea - he hides the knowledge well. He says he doesn't know. He also hastens to comment that any scientist who has watched his apparatus in operation, doesn't know either! He does not name any scientist who has watched his device in operation. The common explanation of the source of its energy has been from "the magnetic lines of force of the earth". If such is the source, Nikola Tesla, the great electrical inventor, once commented, "such a force would have to be measured in 'mouse-power'".

There are two other possible sources. One is earth electricity, the second, atmospheric electricity. It was Tesla himself who established there were such charges in each. He learned the earth's charge was positive, the atmosphere's, negative. Tesla also learned Nature has a means of maintaining the earth's full charge continually. If he ever satisfied himself *how* this was accomplished, it remains one of his many secrets.

There is a possibility the earth may be an "electro-magnet", rather than a permanent one. If so, there is also a possibility its power could be considered above the "mouse" classification. Dr. Edward C. Bullard of the National Physical Laboratory in London, presents a theory accounting for the earth's possible electro-magnetic field. Briefly, Dr. Bullard says the earth's liquid or semi-plastic core is highly radioactive. This radioactivity generates enough heat so motion in the form of convection currents is set up. These currents provide the "excitement" necessary to make electro-magnetism a possibility. Thus, in theory, at least, there are possibilities of a source of power to operate Hendershot's apparatus. It may well be, while its potential is theoretically great, like the power from the sun, its actuality is small. It is also possible, while its potentiality is great, the cost of collecting it or converting it, is also great, because our present methods of using energy are so crude. We seem to waste much more than we use. As yet, we have not overcome the "friction of use!"

Someone has said, "point of view is everything." Well, if not everything, then a great deal. Digging out "facts" is often dependent upon the tint of the lenses in one's glasses. Here is what I mean. Early in Hendershot's experience he was taken to Detroit's Selfridge Field to demonstrate his "motor" to Major Thomas G. Lanphier, Commandant of the Field. The Major was interested in the device, but never claimed any sponsorship of it. Shortly, Detroit newspapers carried stories that the technicians at the Field had constructed a device under orders of Major Lanphier and under instructions from Hendershot. This motor *worked* according to press releases of that day.

Being interested in this point, after considerable difficulty, I located, now Colonel and retired, Thomas G. Lanphier. In answering direct questions from me, Colonel Lanphier informed me that no Hendershot device of any sort was ever constructed at Selfridge Field under Hendershot's instructions while he, Lanphier, was Commandant. Lanphier said, "The only device ever at the Field was one which Hendershot brought to the Field - and it was proved a fake at an eastern University laboratory."

I laid this information before Hendershot. He remarked, he could not understand it at all, because the device *was* built at the Field, by Field technicians. That he, Hendershot, did not even so much as wind a single coil of it. That the completed device did work - just as the newspapers had reported. Thus are enigmas built!

A Washington, DC, newspaper carried a story on March 9th, 1928, relating Hendershot was recovering in a Washington hospital from a 2000 volt shock sustained while demonstrating his device in the office of his patent attorney, presumably to interested capital. I have in my files a letter from a newspaperman, along with one of the leading Pittsburgh daily papers, which states Hendershot was not taken to the hospital for any such treatment at all, but for a lunacy test. Strange as it may sound, Hendershot was not found "guilty", and was released. One is often quite surprised at the tip of Justice's scale!

Whether Hendershot's device is ever developed to a point where it is, or can be, understood and used for 'everyday purposes', both he and it will always be 'between covers'. This came about through Charles Fort having devoted several pages to Hendershot in his book, "Wild Talents", last chapter (32). Fort doesn't "plug" very hard for Hendershot, but does bring up several points which might otherwise be overlooked. I asked Hendershot if he had seen that which Fort had written about him. Hendershot replied that he had. As Hendershot answered several other questions relative to the publication, I thought I noticed a bit of impatience both in his tone of voice and general attitude. This indicated to me he was not overly pleased with the words he read.

The January, 1950 issue of "Fate" magazine carried a story of Hendershot. My investigations lead me to believe this story was based upon the account in the Fort book along with those of several newspapers published in 1928. When I brought this story to Mr. Hendershot's attention, his reply to my questions were evasive. I gained the feeling that Hendershot knew Mr. Fleming, the article's author, but for some reason was displeased with either the piece, or the results *accruing* from it. There may be an interesting story lying buried here!

In the May, 1953, issue of "Fate" magazine appeared an advertisement from the "Utility Engines" professing to have plans for sale of a so-called Hendershot motor for \$2.50. Suddenly, all mail was rejected by the address of the "Utility Engines"! I asked Hendershot about this matter. He told me he learned of it soon after the advertisement was published. Soon after that he learned about the plans they were selling and using his name. They were doing this, Hendershot claimed, without his permission or consent. He told me that he promptly informed the postal authorities of this circumstance. "They must have done something about it, for I heard nothing more about them," he said. Hendershot was quite emphatic to me regarding the plans put out by the "Utility Engines" *not* being of his device. He was so emphatic, in fact, I felt he, like the maiden, "didst protest too much". Thus, 'the ol' hound dog's nose' went to the ground! In due course it came up with the information furnished by an acquaintance of Hendershot's to the effect that Hendershot had remarked at the time, while the "Utility Engines" information was not his device, "it was pretty damn close!"

I have had the "Utility Engines" material before several competent radio and electronic men. They say the diagram of connections are definitely within the radio band of frequencies. They comment that the device would undoubtedly work - *if* close enough to a powerful radio transmitting station and stated "We find nothing original existing in the circuit or in the arrangements of components". I also know of several who have been trying for months to "make something out of the prints", but so far, have failed to do so. These men are trained in electronics and radio techniques. If the plans are as close as indicated by Hendershot's remarks, some one may "stumble" across the right answers. Who knows?

The afternoon I met Hendershot he was in his front yard taking some pictures of his young sons with a new Polaroid camera. I am pretty sure the camera was new, because the pictures were not turning out well. Hendershot is a rather short man, balding somewhat, and is a rather rotund build. His eyes are dark brown, alert, and at time piercing. He seldom smiles. When he does smile it is a wan smile, and not very generous in amount. Hendershot gestures a great deal with his hands, and shakes his head negatively often. I felt he distrusted me greatly. This became more evident as I laid before him more and more of the information I had. Many of my questions Hendershot refused to answer point blank, referring me to his attorney. When these same questions were laid before his attorney, the attorney also refused to answer them. Why, only time will tell. I think I know.

Probably, there is "something to" the Hendershot device, or any other of its nature. Whether that "something" is of great potential or not, remains to be seen. Fantastic amounts of energy lay all about us. Mankind seems only to have learned to use energy in huge quantities, wasting most of it. The more "civilized" he has become, the greater his energy use - and waste. It is quite evident, if he continues to multiply and continues to require more energy, he will have to look for it in some new places, or entirely revamp his machinery. There appear certain basic dangers for man along the pathway of using atomic energy - dangers of processes and uses getting out of hand, thus blowing himself and his planet to Kingdom Come. There may be as many dangers along the pathways of earth electricity, electro-magnetism, atmospheric electricity, or solar power, but somehow I have a feeling there are not. Everything we have, everything we know, was put together once. As far as we have learned, the putting together process has consumed considerable of that which we know as "time". Perhaps "hurry" has been the tune of the piper - and we haven't asked the price!