



Lewis Imm

Librascope was founded by Lewis W. Imm in 1937, when he developed the first "Librascope," a balance computer built to determine the center of balance for airplanes, namely the Douglas DC-3 and the Lockheed "14," the mainstays of commercial air travel at the time. Imm had seen the difficulties encountered by the need for computing the center of balance in loading aircraft while working as an engineer for the Bureau of Air Commerce, and in 1937, he left the Bureau to develop the first "Librascope."

During the early years, Mr. Imm worked for a period of time as an engineer for Lockheed days while he was working for Librascope at night. This was not necessarily a matter of choice, but funds were scarce and payrolls had to be met, even though the payroll consisted of less than ten people.

From 1937 to 1941, the Company made quite a few moves from shops in Burbank on San Fernando Rd., to Gage St., to Tujunga Ave., and finally in 1941, to a plant on Santa Anita St. where the Company stayed until moving to its present site in 1949.

In 1941, Mr. Imm began to encounter difficulties which were common to many small progressive companies at that time. The defense program was swinging into high gear and orders were available for much needed defense supplies. Many of these orders called for much greater capacity and financial backing than most small companies had. Faced with this problem, Mr. Imm decided that the future of the Company and the needs of the Country called for action.

Accordingly, he decided to sell Librascope to the General Precision Equipment Corporation in order to obtain substantial financial backing. On November 12, 1941, Librascope became a subsidiary of the GPE Corporation. Under GPE ownership, Mr. Herbert Griffin became president of Librascope and Mr. Imm became an engineering consultant for the firm.

In the early war years, production at Librascope was predominantly on the Mark 7 barrage computer, also known as the LC 6. The Mark 7 computer, like the balance computer, was a manually operated linkage type. During the years when the Mark 7 was in production, Mr. Imm was occupied much of the time with the development of a new computer, the Mark 4, for antisubmarine use. From 1942 to 1944, he spent many days on shipboard determining requirements for the computer.

In March of 1947, Mr. Griffin was succeeded by Mr. George Friedl, as president of Librascope. At the same time, Mr. Imm became Chief Development Engineer where he continued with research and development work for the Company, which by now was considerably more advanced and complex than in the days of the balance computer.

In December of 1949, Mr. Imm returned to the presidency of Librascope, and under his direction, Librascope began to grow and prosper and gained a respected place among those companies on which the U. S. Navy still depends.