James D Cobine

- In 1945 Dr. Cobine joined the staff of the General Electric Company’s Research Laboratory, where he remained for the rest of his career, winning dozens of patents and publishing many scores of professional papers.
- With a wide range of interests and talents, Dr. Cobine turned his attention to such disparate topics as inert gas welding, light amplification, magnahydrodynamics and the acceleration of mass to a velocity.
- His most recognized work was his development of high-power vacuum interrupters, which replaced earlier oil-based current interruptors. The new invention proved highly effective, cost efficient and widely applicable, and therefore had far-reaching consequences for power transmission and distribution. For this work, in 1969 Dr. Cobine was awarded the IEEE’s Lamme Medal “for his contributions to the knowledge and development of gaseous discharge devices and their adaptation to the development of high-power vacuum interrupters.”
- In 1952, taking stock of the developing technology, Dr. Cobine was convinced that the time had come to mount an all-out assault on the electrode problems, and GE agreed. There ensued an intensive nine-year program culminating in 1961, when GE was able to announce the world’s first high-power vacuum recloser—one that was rated in the distribution range.
- In 1962, Dr. Cobine’s many contributions to this enormously significant development were celebrated at a special switchgear session of the winter general meeting of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (AIEE, now IEEE).
- Dr Cobine was a fellow of the IEEE, a member of the National Society of Professional Engineers, the American Society of Engineering Education and the American Institute of Physics.
- Relation to UW ECE Department: BS in EE