

## ***A STATUE FOR FATHER***

***By***

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First time? Really? But of course you have heard of it. Yes, I was sure you had.

If you're really interested in the discovery, believe me, I'll be delighted to tell you. It's a story I've always liked to tell, but not many people give me the chance. I've even been advised to keep the story under wraps. It interferes with the legends growing up about my father.

Still, I think the truth is valuable. There's a moral to it. A man can spend his life devoting his energies solely to the satisfaction of his own curiosity and then, quite accidentally, without ever intending anything of the sort, find himself a benefactor of humanity.

Dad was just a theoretical physicist, devoted to the investigation of time travel. I don't think he ever gave a thought to what time travel might mean to *Homo sapiens*. He was just curious about the mathematical relationships that governed the universe, you see.

*Hungry? All the better. I imagine it will take nearly half an hour. They will do it properly for an official such as yourself. It's a matter of pride.*

To begin with, Dad was poor as only a university professor can be poor. Eventually, though, he became wealthy. In the last years before his death he was fabulously rich, and as for myself and my children and grandchildren-well, you can see for yourself.

They've put up statues to him, too. The oldest is on the hillside right here where the discovery was made. You can just see it out the window. Yes. Can you make out the inscription? Well, we're standing at a bad angle. No matter.

By the time Dad got into time-travel research the whole problem had been given up by most physicists as a bad job. It had begun with a splash when the Chrono-funnels were first set up.

Actually, they're not much to see. They're completely irrational and uncontrollable. What you see is distorted and wavery, two feet across at the most, and it vanishes quickly. Trying to focus on the past is like trying to focus on a feather caught in a hurricane that has gone mad.

They tried poking grapples into the past but that was just as unpredictable. Sometimes it was carried off successfully for a few seconds with one man leaning hard against the grapple. But more often a pile driver couldn't push it through. Nothing was ever obtained out of the past until--Well, I'll get to that.

After fifty years of no progress, physicists just lost interest. The operational technique seemed a complete blind alley; a dead end. I can't honestly say I blame them as I look back on it. Some of them even tried to show that the funnels didn't actually expose the past, but there had been too many sightings of living animals through the funnels-animals now extinct.

Anyway, when time travel was almost forgotten, Dad stepped in. He talked the government into giving him a grant to set up a Chrono-funnel of his own, and tackled the matter all over again.

I helped him in those days. I was fresh out of college, with my own doctorate in physics.

However, our combined efforts ran into bad trouble after a year or so. Dad had difficulty in getting his grant renewed. Industry wasn't interested and the university decided he was besmirching their reputation by being so single-minded in investigating a dead field. The dean of the graduate school, who understood only the financial end of scholarship, began by hinting that he switch to more lucrative fields and ended by forcing him out.

Of course, the dean-still alive and still counting grant-dollars when Dad died-probably felt quite foolish, I imagine, when Dad left the school a million dollars free and clear in his will, with a codicil canceling the bequest on the ground that the dean lacked vision. But that was merely posthumous revenge. For years before that

*I don't wish to dictate, but please don't have any more of the breadsticks. The clear soup, eaten slowly to prevent a too-sharp appetite, will do.*

Anyway, we managed somehow. Dad kept the equipment we had bought with the grant money, moved it out of the university and set it up here.

Those first years on our own were brutal, and I kept urging him to give up. He never would. He was indomitable, always managing to find a thousand dollars somewhere when we needed it.