

KNOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S KNOT

by Howard V. Hendrix

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Illustration by Nicholas Jainschigg

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Or, changing to a tangled story....

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Mike Sakler knew about chaos. In the 1950s his doctoral work in turbulent airflow dynamics eventually led to a job with a major aerospace contractor in Southern California. He'd dabbled in nonlinear dynamics throughout his career, then chaos and complexity theory in the 1980s and '90s. Since his retirement and his wife Ginny's death of lung cancer in 1989, he'd had lots of time for dabbling.

With the kids grown and gone, he sold the family house in Southern California and moved to the central Sierra Nevada near Alder Springs, an hour outside Fresno, among tall pines and old oaks and tree-sized manzanita. He spent his days working and playing on his twenty-acre spread and in his great barrackslike, twelve-thousand-square-foot retirement "party house." Solar powered and off the grid, he built the house with his own hands, out of wood from his own land's trees.

Once the house was up, he found himself playing more than working: tossing horseshoes, bowing his fiddle, strumming his banjo, jamming with young friends, endlessly tinkering with his home sound-studio's electronics.

His fascination with the Cord 810 Beverly was much more than just play or dabbling, however. Mike considered the mothballed green 1936 Cord to be the strange attractor underlying his increasingly chaotic life.

Part of it was personal history. His own grandfather had owned a Cord exactly like the piece of automotive sculpture previously owned by Donald and Rita Batchelder: same make, model, and year. When Mike was twelve and his Grandfather Sakler about the same age as Mike himself now was, the old man took him in that very car to the 1939 World's Fair, for the first of a dozen visits.

The Batchelder Cord had a long and complex history of its own, going back to Rita's late husband Donald and his purchase of it at an estate sale in New York, years before. Time had pretty much blown the original paint job—a sort of silvery gray-green, like a spruce forest seen at high speed—but that was typical of Cords. Aside from that, the only further damage was the small scratch and dent made by Rita herself in 1955, for which crime Donald had forever after mothballed the car.

So it was that in all other respects the 810 looked the way it did the day it left the factory. The Cord emblem, with its art deco wings, still shining. The eyes of the hidden headlights blissfully sleeping away the years in the big pontoon fenders. The coffin-lid hood fronted by futuristic grillwork—still giving off an impression of blunt velocity, even though the car had been parked and motionless for more than forty years when Mike found it in Rita's garage and had to have it.

Unfortunately, Mike's relationship with Rita didn't continue very long once the sale of the Cord was consummated. What with her calling him a "mercenary, self-centered, heartless old bastard," he couldn't say the affair had ended well.

Still, he reassured himself that, if he wasn't too busy, he could always find another girlfriend through either his martial arts or folk-dancing classes—"ai-ki-do, tae-kwon-do, and do-si-do," as he liked to think of them. He'd been doing all of them for so many years that he'd have black belts in all three if they handed out black belts in folk dance.

Widow Batchelder may have called him heartless, but his heart was fine—or at least as fine as years of exercise, the latest heart meds, and the occasional angioplasty could make it. Oddly, though, he took the fiasco of his break-up with Rita worse than he would have thought. Funneling all his energy into restoring the Cord had the virtue of diverting his attention to what seemed to be more tractable problems, at least at first.

He started with the car's aesthetics—smoothing out the dent and scratch, lifting off all the chrome pieces, getting them and the bare steel bumpers all shined up again. He redid the paint job in its original green, and worked on all the detailing that would return the car to absolutely mint condition.

The bodywork went well. Rita claimed her husband had drained the gas and thoroughly changed the oil when he mothballed the car in 1955, so Mike felt his odds of restoring the engine should at least be even, too.

He removed all the plugs and mystery-oiled the holes. The car wouldn't start.

He removed and cleaned the fuel system. It wouldn't start.

He rebuilt the carburetor, did a leak-down test for the rings, and checked the valves. It wouldn't start.

He hooked pulleys to an external electric motor and cranked things around a bit to check the compression. It wouldn't start.

He adjusted what didn't need replacing, brought up the fuel, water, and electrical levels, put the key in the ignition, said a fervent prayer, and still—it wouldn't start.

He would have loved to give up, but he couldn't. When he neglected to work on it, he felt guilty, as if shirking some responsibility he didn't fully understand. He returned to it again and again, often reluctantly.

He put less effort into keeping up his own health. Where before he had been more than willing to "keep active," now he avoided trips down to the valley for martial arts classes and dance performances.

He'd be damned if he'd let the sawbones put him on one of those bland rabbit food diets. He would eat the way he wanted to, thank you. If you couldn't enjoy life while trying to stay alive, you might as well already be dead.

The same was true of his drinking—which, after long hiatus, he took up again in a big way. His young party-people friends kept visiting for a while, some even helping him with his automotive restoration work, but gradually his "drinking and tinkering" drove them away.

A year and a half into the Cord project, after the endless big failures and small successes, Mike Sakler finally hit bottom.

He drank heavily the first part of the night, then fell asleep. Toward morning, Mike knew he was starting to wake up again when he dreamed he was drunk—and had tied a noose to hang himself.

He had hoped for months and months the drinking would crank up the stage machinery that made the fog in his brain, until it filled the theater of his consciousness, obscuring his memory uniformly. It hadn't worked out that

way.

Instead, as the months had passed, his memory had become more and more like the Tule fog that came up out of the ground in the valley below—fog thick yet low, so that it was easier to look straight up through it and see a star shining down out of all those long lost light-years than see the streetlamp just passed a block and a moment before.

The star that shone down on him in his foggiest darkness now was a perfect image of the Perisphere and Trylon, with the Helicline ramping down around them: the “Egg, Spike, and Ramp,” the prime symbols of the 1939 World’s Fair and its “World of Tomorrow” theme.

That was the future that was—yet never was yet. His childhood attempts with the Build-Your-Own New York World’s Fair kits never got much beyond building scale models of the 610-foot-tall Trylon obelisk, its 188-foot-tall Perisphere globe companion, and the Helicline ramp linking them, but that had been all right with him. Those three were what really mattered.

How much Grandpa had loved that fair was a surprise to everyone in the family. Patriarch of a large New York Jewish clan, all the relations thought him old-fashioned, with his banjo and fiddle playing, the same instruments he’d taught Mike to play before Mike was ten.

Mike knew his grandfather wasn’t old fashioned, though. The old man had been picking up *Amazing This* and *Popular That* at the newsstand for years and sharing them with his precocious, frenetic, problem-child of a grandson.

After that first trip to the Fair, Grandpa was a quiet visionary no more—a result of the same run-in with Yorkville street toughs that had altered the old man’s physiognomy, or so some in the family theorized. From whatever cause, in his last two years of life Grandfather Sakler experienced a personal Indian summer, a blaze of fierce, bright, quirky creativity in his closing days. He began keeping a journal and corresponding with world leaders and thinkers, especially Albert Einstein, with whom he met once (by accident) at the Fair and, later, by appointment at Princeton—twice.

Now, amid his deepest fog, Mike remembered the trunkload of Fair memorabilia he inherited from the old man. Rummaging with sudden furious energy through closets and drawers in the eight empty bedrooms and the enormous party room on the top floor of his cavernous house, he

found he couldn't remember where he'd stored the trunk.

He staggered down his house's great spiral staircase to the main floor and pillaged more storage spaces. Fear and frustration gnawing at him, he stumbled down one last circuit of the turning stairway. In a spare basement room he finally found it: the musty sealed steamer trunk that was his legacy from an old man dead more than fifty years.

Inside, he found journals and correspondence and other writings, an intriguing but inexplicable device apparently handcrafted by the old man, even a full suit of what appeared to be his grandfather's clothes, smelling slightly of smoke, with fine shoes and shirts and underwear, too, wrapped in a garment bag that had grown brittle with age.

All the Fair memorabilia was still there. The Trylon and Perisphere-adorned orange and blue high-modern Official Souvenir Book. Democracy clocks. Fair plates and puzzles and radios. Heinz pickle pins and a crop of GM-Futurama "I Have Seen The Future" buttons—of which the old man had been particularly fond.

Mike hadn't looked at any of this stuff since the early '50s and had looked at none of it thoroughly at any time. What he remembered, from his previous glances through it, was embarrassment—and fear that, in his final years, his grandfather had become a slightly crazed technobabbler, his notebooks full of inexplicable terms, diagrams, and equations.

What caught his eye now were the photos. In the shots taken before May 1939, the family resemblance that was always there was never so striking as it was in those images taken *after* that first trip to the World's Fair.

He stared at a fading color picture of himself as a boy. Beside him stood a thin, mostly bald man whose remaining hair and beard were a mix of white and gray and yellow—his grandfather, on one of their later trips to the World's Fair, with the Trylon and Perisphere in the distance behind them.

Mike knew his own visage well enough to see how close the resemblance was between the way the old man looked then and the way he himself looked now. It was almost as if the boy had grown up to become his own grandfather.

Grabbing the trunk by both handles, he hauled it upstairs. Its weight forced him to pause and lean against the railings or wall of the stairwell

every few feet. When he reached his office, he set the trunk down beside his eight-by-twenty-foot worktable.

Clearing his Cord-related stuff from the workspace, he removed the trunk's contents and spread them out over the table's broad top. Up came the suit of clothes and other garments. The sharp leather shoes, too.

Next came all the memorabilia, the flyers, the brochures, the programs. The oxymoronic prose of the captions describing GM's Futurama, "a vast miniature cross section of America as it may conceivably appear two decades hence...."

He sat down slowly in the chair at the worktable. Looking more carefully through the correspondence and the writings again after all these years, Mike thought that the notes now seemed less demented than eerily prescient. Here, paper-clipped to a page of typed notes in a binder, was a letter apparently sent from Einstein himself:

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Matter can be made to "degrade" into energy more readily than energy can be made to "upgrade" into matter. I do not, however, believe matter and energy are just types of information, as you have suggested, or that there is a spectrum linking them such that consciousness is just a more complex form of information than matter or energy. Nor do I believe that consciousness can be made to "degrade" more readily into matter and energy than matter and energy can be made to "upgrade" into consciousness. Although the distinction between past, present and future is an illusion, the distinction between energy, matter, and consciousness is not.

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Indeed the notes from that page on were most curious. "Planck energy for opening gap in spacetime fabric = 10^{19} billion electron volts," read one, but then that was crossed out with a large X as the writer of the notes took a different tack.

"At each bifurcation point," read the next, "flux occurs in which many potential futures are present. Iteration and amplification mean one future is chosen and others disappear. In bifurcations the past is continually recycled, held timeless in eddies or closed timelike curves, stabilized through feedback. Time is turbulently recurrent, expressing self-similarity

across different scales.”

After a flurry of equations came an underlined conclusion: “Human nervous system both classical and quantum, exploits quantum scale processes to accomplish macroscale ends—solution lies in phase-locking feedback!”

Mike picked up a page with a meticulously hand-plotted diagram, hauntingly beautiful in its elegant simplicity. When he looked at it more closely, he found the diagram was labeled with questions: “Closed Timelike Rossler Attractor? Temporal Mobius in Phase Space?” Below the question was the note, “Always incompleteness and missing information at the center. The shape of uncertainty shapes certainty.”

What pushed Mike back in his chair, however, was how much the “Temporal Mobius in Phase Space” resembled an idealized, abstract image of Perisphere, Trylon, and Helicline. Looking away from the image, he realized that the sun was up, that his head hurt with hangover, and—something else. Bifurcations? Self-similarity? Phase-locking feedback? Phase space? That was the language of chaos theory!

His hand trembled as he flipped through more and more pages of detailed notes, until he reached the inside back cover of the notebook-binder. Taped to it was an ancient envelope, with the words MICHAEL SAKLER written on it. With a shaky hand he pulled the envelope loose from the notebook and opened it.

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LETTER TO MYSELF:

If Professor Einstein is right about what he calls a “Temporal Mobius” and I am right about the role consciousness plays on the information spectrum, then reading this letter is about to stop you from drinking yourself to slow suicide. Perhaps you have by now realized that these notes are memories of the future, not only mine in 1939, but also yours. In 1997 you have not written these notes yet, but you will—in 1939.

As a boy, we first traveled with Grandfather Sakler to the Fair on May 28, 1939, to witness the opening of the Jewish Palestine Pavilion. Albert Einstein speaks there, and that day you—I—meet him for the first time. The old man whom the boy returns home with is not his

grandfather. It is himself from sixty years into that boy's future.

Why must "we" go through such temporal acrobatics? I'm glad I asked. If we don't, our grandfather will be brutally murdered after running out of gas in Yorkville on the night of May 28. The very fact that this temporal Mobius exists proves that possibility.

On one timeline, embittered by our grandfather's death, one of the many possible "us" devotes his life to inventing a time-travel device and uses it to return to 1939 to save our already severely injured Grandfather by sending him into the future. He—we—I—remain in 1939, taking over the role of that grandfather. The boy is spared the suffering and grief of seeing his grandfather die from his injuries.

In creating the device and using it to alter his own timeline, however, our other self on that line creates a temporal paradox. On that timeline, Grandfather Sakler is killed and as a result one of us grows up to create the device that will allow him to travel back to 1939 to prevent Grandfather Sakler's murder. Preventing Grandpa's murder, however, means none of us ever grows up to become the man who invents the device to prevent Grandpa's murder. Therefore Grandfather Sakler is killed and one of us grows up to create the device that will allow him to ... et cetera, et cetera.

Professor Einstein tells me the structure of the universe will not tolerate such an endless conundrum. Instead it conserves its own integrity by melding the two timelines together into "the temporal equivalent of a Mobius strip"—something both and neither loop and intersection. On such a dimension- collapsing Mobius, "either/or" (either Grandpa is saved or the device is created) becomes "not only/but also" (not only is Grandpa saved but the device is also created).

We have, in some sense, been "grandfathered into" this temporal loophole, but at a cost. The price of this shift to "not only/but also" is the energy of our eternal vigilance. If we want his murder to never again recur, we must ever again prevent its recurrence.

I know this is difficult for you to understand at first, but if you choose to perpetuate this recurrence, you will learn that time travel is less like running a particle accelerator and more like experiencing a lucid dream or particularly vivid memory.

Utilizing the chaotic effects always present in consciousness, we can exploit time's turbulent and strange-attractive properties to burst the surface tension of spacetime at far, far less than Planck energy. I know we can, because we already have.

For us, it's not only the dream of the doing that's grandfather to the memory of the accomplishment, but also the reverse: The memory of the accomplishment is grandfather to the dream of the doing.

The device in the steamer trunk is only partially complete. I have done as much as I can with technology available before mid-century. The system can only be completed with technology from your era. I have enclosed a list of what you'll need. You'll have to search it out and make it all work together, if you choose to perpetuate our responsibility in this and knot your grandfather's knot—our grandfather's knot, and Einstein's knot—in that old Cord.

I hope you will do so, and will find it both a loophole that binds and a knot that frees, as I have. At all events, good luck!

—Michael Sakler

P.S.: That Cord's no hot rod, but it's crucial to the set and setting of the mental state required for this time travel experience. It also works well enough for hauling batteries and getting around New York in 1939, so treat it kindly!

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Mike slowly folded the letter. Lost in thought, he stroked his beard absently for a while. *Well, it's better than the other option for a loophole that binds and a knot that frees*, he told himself, remembering his hungover dream of a hangman's noose.

He got up from the table and the chair and stretched. Then he went downstairs, down to the garage/workshop where the Cord sat with its hood up. The sun was shining brightly just beyond the shadows. He got to work.

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Focused on that work, Mike's days flew by. A certain balance had returned to his life, too: his obsession was no longer a mad one. He returned, at least sporadically, to his ai-ki-do, tae-kwon-do, do-si-do

classes. He sent a card of apology to the widow, who unfortunately was not interested in reestablishing contact. During 1998 and early 1999 he even went to temple a few times—something he hadn't done in years.

Maybe the prayers paid off. In June of 1998, he was able to start and run the Cord's engine for the first time—and the completed restoration cost him less than he'd expected. Such was not the case with completing the "Temporal Mobius Generator," however.

The interface synching his mind up to the machine and capable of inducing the mind-chaos needed for his time trip required state-of-the-art neuro-hookups so expensive he had to take out a second mortgage on his property. They were on the 1939 list, however, so he purchased top-of-the-line units from a "mindware" dealer operating out of a software storefront in a Marin County strip mall.

Using the system he put together, Mike experimented with low voltages to create a map of his own mind's functioning. Taking as his guide the 1939 notes—with their jargon of "ekstasis points," "temporal dissipation vortices," and "eschaton particles"—he located regions of his brain that, when stimulated, produced both "out of body experience" and vivid strange-attractor memories of the World's Fair. These, the notes indicated, were vital to the temporal voyage he was to undertake.

By May of 1999 all was in final readiness. A couple of days before his planned time jaunt, he took the now operational and fully equipped Cord on one lengthy test drive—but only one.

That test drive in itself narrowly missed becoming a disaster. Driving the Cord down to the Valley to see his doctor for his routine physical, he felt fine and the car was running fine, but he still almost didn't make it. Pulling off of Herndon Avenue and into the rat's maze of private medical offices surrounding St. Agnes Hospital, he blanked out at the wheel. Only in the last second did he catch himself—and catch the hard left turn he very nearly missed.

When he finally pulled into a parking spot, he was both shaken and relieved. He had narrowly escaped smashing into the cinder-block wall separating the parking lot of his doctor's building from the hospital's parking lot.

Well, he reminded himself as he walked to his appointment, if I'd smashed through the wall, at least I would have practically landed in the emergency room!

The only sign of Mike's brush with Fate was a slightly elevated pulse rate. No trace of a mini-stroke or any other brain glitch that might explain his blanking out just moments earlier. His doctor declared him to be in fine shape, outside of the pulse spike—especially considering his cholesterol and his plaqued arteries and everything else the doctor deigned to lecture him on.

Given Mike's failure to change his diet to save his ticker, the doctor warned him that he would have to remain absolutely faithful in taking his heart pills and would likely still need to have surgery within the year to remove his blood mud. Mike agreed politely but planned on changing nothing because, two days later, he was ready to go.

Into his winged chariot's trunk Mike loaded the big Exide storage batteries that had, until then, provided electrical storage for the solar panels atop the roof of his off-the-grid party house. Despite the fact that his house would soon be going dark, he was in a celebratory mood.

He decided to dress appropriately for the occasion. From the closet in his office Mike removed the full suit of clothes and shoes he'd taken from the trunk so long before and tried them on. All the clothes fit perfectly, as he somehow knew they would.

He looked at himself in the mirror, a man of not inconsiderable years, dressed in a dark suit and tie of a rather conservative cut, topped by a snap-brim hat. Yes, just what the well-dressed time traveler would be wearing in 1939.

He locked up his home. Walking toward the Cord in the driveway, he twice glanced back wistfully toward his huge handmade house. Starting up the Cord, he drove it through evening light along a deserted forest service gravel road until it passed directly beneath the hydroelectric powerlines, where he stopped.

Rigging up a coupling and converter, he linked power from an overhead line to the battery array in the trunk. From the system of dams and turbines on the upper San Joaquin River, he swiped enough of that "clean, safe Democracy energy" to bring the device and the storage batteries up to maximum.

As he decoupled his power tap, he doubted the power company would much notice. A little free juice was the least they owed him, after he'd put up with this power line eyesore all these years.

The fully restored Cord spun gravel on the last stretch of switchbacks before fishtailing up onto the blacktop of Alder Springs Road. Einstein had once contended that imagination was more important than knowledge. At this moment, Mike felt like a living embodiment of that premise.

No machine alone could do what he was going to do. The chaos of brain, the individuality of mind, the singularity of memory: all were indispensable to the reality of travel in time.

Over the blacktop he drove to the summit of the ridge, then stopped the Cord. Its engine thrummed along placidly, idling, as he watched the sun go down. Slowly, the rim of the turning world obscured the light of day. Soon the first stars began to come out.

Mike took off his hat and put on his temples the circlets containing the neuro-hookups. Checking everything one last time, he threw the switches to activate the timers and all the memory systems of all the computers on board, revved the engine as high as it would go, put the Cord in gear, then took his foot off the brake.

He was overcome by a euphoric sensation of floating upward, not unlike what he had sometimes experienced just as he drifted off to sleep and the bed beneath him seemed to fall away. This time, however, there was no hard jerk of ordinary consciousness striking to reassert control.

This time he just kept drifting, a full-blown out-of-body experience bringing his body and the car with it. Faintly he heard the engine sounds breaking up, digitizing, becoming discrete, then wildly dilated, then sounding almost as if they were being played backward.

Through the windshield and windows he saw a fog rising—a type of Bose condensate. Mike seemed to have seen it before: thick yet low, the Tule fog of memory.

He looked up through the windshield and saw a star perched atop a great curving skybridge, like a diamond ring effect seen during a total eclipse of the sun. The bridge was a vast, slightly rainbow-shimmering catenary Mobius curve. From this angle, it looked rather like the St. Louis Gateway Arch, only countless miles high—and it wasn't so much "in" the sky as it somehow *was* the sky.

The Cord was moving in and through the skybridge, in the ultimate daredevil stunt loop. His own memories ran like cords of fog through the

suspended and suspending bridge and tunnel. Particular events in his life possessed their own unique gravity, curving and warping his memoryspace in ways he could not have foretold—

—until the fogbridge did its Mobius fillip and he sat outside the 1939 World's Fair, in sunshine, in the Cord, in the parking lot that would one day become Shea Stadium. Through the windshield he saw the Trylon and Perisphere surrounded by the whole of the Fair, a candied confection of the Future to be consumed by the present.

Too often, for him, black and white was the past, while the future was color. Yet here he was, in the past—and in color. Putting on his hat as he stepped out of the car, Mike was a man inside his own dream.

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Might as well enjoy myself, he thought. He grabbed a frankfurter with everything at Swift & Company's streamlined super-airliner building, then some ice cream over by Sealtest's triple shark-finned edifice. He paid for them with the antique liberty coins the notes had suggested he bring.

Strolling about the fairgrounds, he saw again how wind-shaped so many of the structures appeared. Buildings that looked as if they'd been designed in wind tunnels. Frank R. Paul mélanges of fins and keels and flanges. Spirals, helices, and domes, their towers topped with zeppelin-mast spires. An airstream wonderland, waiting for the inevitable arrival of Northrop flying wings and Bel Geddes teardrop cars.

Stopping at the base of the Trylon and examining it closely, Mike rediscovered the Fair's secret. Like everything else, the Trylon was intended to look smoothly mass produced, machine precise, and slipstream slick. Up close, however, he saw that its surface was rough, stuccoed with all the "smoothness" of jesso over burlap. Beneath its assembly-line dreams of aerodynamic cowls and zero-drag fairings, the great exhibition felt handcrafted—a prototype of the shape of things to come, not a production model.

The future is best viewed from a distance, Mike thought as he approached the Chrysler Motors Building in the Transportation Zone. Remembering its "Rocketport" display, he went inside.

Where he literally bumped into Albert Einstein.

"Pardon me, Professor," Mike said quickly.

“Not a problem, not a problem,” the Nobel laureate said with a distracted smile, turning back to lean on a railing. Together they watched the Rocketgun simulate another blastoff into tomorrow, with full noise and light special effects.

“They’ll probably use it for shooting atomic bombs at each other,” Mike remarked, “long before they use it for passengers.”

Einstein gave him a startled look, then smiled wryly and shrugged.

This was the hard part. The only way Mike had been able to come up with to get the great man’s attention was the way Klaatu had gotten Professor Barnhart’s attention in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. Mike couldn’t remember how fluent Einstein’s English was, but he pressed on quickly nonetheless.

“I know you’ve been working on unified field theory,” Mike said, pulling a folded sheaf of papers and a card from his coat pocket, “so I thought you might be interested in this.”

Unfolding the papers, Mike presented the sheaf to the professor. On the pages he had diagrammed, with explanatory captions, a particularly interesting variant of what would someday be called the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen theorem.

Einstein glanced at the pages, perfunctorily at first, just humoring him. Then the physicist’s eyes grew wide as he realized the importance of what he was looking at.

“Wo—Where—?”

“I knew you’d see their merit,” Mike said, gesturing toward the thin sheaf, then handing Einstein the card with his grandfather’s name, address, and phone number. “It’s been a pleasure meeting you in person, Professor. I can be reached at this address. Let’s keep in touch.”

“Ja—er, yes!” Einstein said, shuffling papers and card about in his hands so he could shake the hand Mike offered him. Tipping his hat and turning before he melted away into the crowd, Mike was pleased he’d made his Einstein contact already.

Deciding to treat himself to as much of the Fair as possible before he made his way to the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, he toured the Town of

Tomorrow. Then it was on to the Immortal Well and its streamlined Time Capsule, scheduled to be opened in 6939 a.d. Next he saw the robots Elektro the Moto-Man and his Moto-Dog, Sparko, perform in the Westinghouse Building.

He felt a childlike awe at General Electric's ten-million-volt indoor lightning-bolt show, and Consolidated Edison's block-long "City of Light" diorama. The line for the GM Futurama was far too long, however. His rendezvous with that tech triumph could wait for another visit.

He made his way through what felt more and more like a planetary county fair, until he at last reached the Jewish Palestine Pavilion. During the day the numbers of spectators for the pavilion's official opening ceremonies had swelled past fifty thousand. On the fringes of the crowd, entrepreneurs sold Jewish Palestine flags, as well as armbands and yarmulkes adorned with the Star of David.

Recalling that his grandfather—though neither Orthodox nor Conservative—had on a lark bought such a yarmulke at the World's Fair today and all those years ago, Mike now bought one as well and put it on, in hope and remembrance.

In his accented English, Einstein himself at last pronounced the words, "I am here entrusted with the high privilege of officially dedicating the building which my Palestine brethren have erected." Amid the vast, cheering crowd, Mike despaired of finding the old man and boy he was seeking, but he kept looking.

By the time the ceremonies ended, Mike still hadn't found the boy and the old man he sought—not even after the crowd broke up.

Worry, frustration, and anxiety warred within him as he drifted like a lost ghost through the great squares and avenues of the Fair, alongside the Lagoon of Nations, past the pavilions of states and governments. He wandered beneath the closing fireworks, his hope fading like blown starshells. He came to the reflecting pool beneath the Perisphere, at just the moment the great voice of that globe began to sound its eerie tocsin over the emptying fair.

With other stragglers he made his way toward the parking lots, panic rising in his mind. He'd lost them somewhere in the Fair! They were no longer on the grounds anywhere! He banged his forehead with palmed fists. How to find them? How to find them?

Getting into the Cord, he sat and stared through the windshield. He felt forlorn and powerless as a lost child. Not even the play of faerie lights over the Trylon and Perisphere could alter his despondent mood. He leaned his head against the steering wheel and mourned inconsolably.

Yorkville.

The word drifted into his consciousness like a boon from a merciful god. Yes! New York's German-American section, where his grandfather had had his run-in with the street gangsters. It was only a hunch, but as he left the parking lot for the streets he could think of nowhere else to go.

He had maps, but the maps were not the city. He got lost, again and again. By memory he had successfully navigated across sixty years of time and thousands of miles of space, but now he was having difficulty finding his way around New York City!

When at last he made his way into Yorkville, streets and landmarks began to take on the faintest aura of *déjà-vu* familiarity. He began to remember. They'd run out of gas, yes. He had waited in the car while his grandfather had gone to fill up the gas can. His grandfather had been gone a long time—

At the far edge of a streetlight, in a vacant lot, Mike saw and heard it, before he was ready for it. Four young men yelling, "*Jude! Unflitiger Jude! Verderber! Teufeljude!*" as they pummeled and kicked an old man.

Mike skidded to a stop beside the nightmare tableau and got out of the car.

At the sound of the Cord screeching to a halt, the young men stopped their heavy-booted work. Hearing the car door opening and slamming, one of the men, the smallest, took to his heels. The other three stood their ground, fists clenched.

Mike walked steadily across the lot toward them. When he was perhaps fifteen feet away, one of the three abruptly broke away toward something off to one side—a gasoline can. Mike saw the youth take matches and handkerchief rag from his pockets. He knew immediately what the boy intended to do.

While the fire maker fumbled about his work, Mike in battle-dance kata waded into the remaining two, punching and kicking.

An elderly avenging angel, he felt strangely detached, as if in a minor trance. His only barely-conscious thought was an odd little mantra—ai-ki-do, tae-kwon-do, do-si-do, again and again.

He knew he took many blows and strikes, but he gave far more, stomping insteps, roundhouse kicking ribs, smashing noses, snapping collarbones, shattering kneecaps. Even Yorkville street toughs had never encountered such a fighting style. They fled at last, but they had done their damage.

His grandfather, doused about the neck and chest with a slosh of gasoline, was going up in slow immolation. It was all Mike could do to put out the fire with his suit coat. The old man's pulse was thready, but the pain of his burns roused him to consciousness.

"Thank you," he whispered, coughing blood.

"Grandpa," Mike said, cradling the old man's head, "it's me, Michael."

"Michael?" asked his grandfather, confused. "How?"

"I know—I'm old," Mike said, picking his grandfather up awkwardly in a fireman's carry. He headed toward the Cord, heart pounding, talking all the while, adrenalin-delirious, trying to explain. "I know it doesn't seem to make sense. But listen, you've got to believe me. I'm sending you into the future. You'll die of your wounds and burns here. I've come from the future to help you. Having you to save saves me, both as the boy I was, and the old man I'll be."

Mike opened the passenger side door of the Cord and propped his grandfather in the seat. Dazedly his grandfather watched him. Taking Grandpa Sakler's keys and money clip, Mike tossed his own wallet onto the seat beside his grandfather.

"All the ID you'll need to pass for me in 1999 is in that wallet and in the car," Mike told him. His grandfather nodded weakly, or perhaps he passed out. Coming around past the back of the car, Mike opened up the driver's side door. Slotting his own key on its key chain into the Cord's ignition, he started the car and turned on the temporal Mobius generator.

The car was equipped with enough computer power for a full memory of his trip here, as per the notes he had written, the notes he would write. Now, though, he would have to change its return destination.

Putting on the neuro-hookups, he fast-reversed the memory guidance record to a bifurcation point two days before he left 1999—to his last trip to the doctor’s office near St. Agnes Hospital, for his physical.

This time, the Cord would miss the turn, and not miss the cinder-block retaining wall. He remembered all he could, then imagined the car through wall and total smashup, into the hospital parking lot—right in front of Emergency, where an old-fashioned man with a secret desire to see the future would finally get his wish.

Turning to his unconscious grandfather, he kissed the old man lightly atop his bloodied head.

“I love you, Grandpa.”

He stood on the brake, revving the engine while in gear. At the same instant he flipped the Mobius generator’s last switch, dropped his foot off the brake, and threw himself from the car, the circlets tearing free of his head.

Around him he felt the chill of death. He was every place and no place at all, every time and no time, and he was falling....

He landed heavily on his hip. Around him a thin mist dissipated as a breeze blew along the street. He propped himself up on his forearm, feeling old and very tired. Something had happened to his memory. His recall of the last several hours was as hazy as a dream or nightmare dissolving on waking.

“Grandpa?” A boy’s voice said, coming toward him. The boy peered into his face with evident concern. “Grandpa, is that you? You don’t look right. Are you okay?”

“Just tripped and fell down, is all,” Mike said, getting slowly to his feet. At last he began remembering something of the role he was supposed to play.

“Grandpa? Where’s the gas can?”

For a moment Mike had no idea what the boy was talking about. The boy looked around.

“Oh, here it is,” the boy said, running to pick it up from the vacant lot, then coming back, still looking at Mike. “Here. Your yarmulke fell off too.”

“I’m a bit discomboobalated from the fall, is all,” Mike said, trying painfully to smile and joke as he took the yarmulke with its Star of David from the boy’s hand. “Thank you. Lead the way back to the car. I’ll follow you.”

The short walk returned Mike partway to his senses. His chest hurt. He realized that, here in 1939, without medications or surgical techniques yet to be invented, he would not live very long.

So be it. Until he died he would lead a very full life. Here, in this time when the future was beautiful and distant as Heaven, he would spend his remaining days remembering—and planning.

“Hey, Grandpa!” the boy called when he’d reached his grandfather’s Cord automobile. “Gimme the keys.”

“What?” Mike said. He looked quizzically at the kid as he took the gas can from the boy. The can was still close to half full. Pouring its remaining contents into the fuel tank, he hoped it would be enough to restart the car.

“You know,” the boy said. “Lemme drive.”

“No, no,” Mike said, waving his hand in a light gesture of dismissal. He put the empty gas can in the trunk, then opened the doors to let them both in. He slipped the key into the ignition and looked at the smiling boy sitting on the other side of the front seat.

“You may just be driving this road, too, someday,” the old man said quietly. “Maybe sooner than you think.”

After a time, the engine caught and they drove away.