



Of Time and Texas

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Published: 1956

Type(s): Short Fiction, Science Fiction

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Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from *Fantastic Universe* November 1956. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

"IN ONE fell swoop," declared Professor C. Cydwick Ohms, releasing a thin blue ribbon of pipe-smoke and rocking back on his heels, "—I intend to solve the greatest problem facing mankind today. Colonizing the Polar Wastes was a messy and fruitless business. And the Enforced Birth Control Program couldn't be enforced. Overpopulation still remains the thorn in our side. Gentlemen—" He paused to look each of the assembled reporters in the eye. "—there is but *one* answer."

"Mass annihilation?" quavered a cub reporter.

"Posh, boy! Certainly not!" The professor bristled. "The answer is—TIME!"

"Time?"

"Exactly," nodded Ohms. With a dramatic flourish he swept aside a red velvet drape—to reveal a tall structure of gleaming metal. "As witness!"

"Golly, what's *that* thing?" queried the cub.

"This *thing*," replied the professor acidly, "—is the C. Cydwick Ohms Time Door."

"Whillikers, a Time Machine!"

"Not so, not so. *Please*, boy! A Time Machine, in the popular sense, is impossible. Wild fancy! However—" The professor tapped the dottle from his pipe. "—by a mathematically precise series of infinite calculations, I have developed the remarkable C. Cydwick Ohms Time Door. Open it, take but a single step—and, presto! The Past!"

"But, *where* in the past, Prof.?"

Ohms smiled easily down at the tense ring of faces. "Gentlemen, beyond this door lies the sprawling giant of the Southwest—enough land to absorb Earth's overflow like *that*!" He snapped his fingers. "I speak, gentlemen, of Texas, 1957!"

"What if the Texans *object*?"

"They have no choice. The Time Door is strictly a one-way passage. I saw to that. It will be utterly impossible for anyone in 1957 to re-enter our world of 2057. And now—the Past awaits!"

He tossed aside his professorial robes. Under them Cydwick Ohms wore an ancient and bizarre costume: black riding boots, highly polished and trimmed in silver; wool chaps; a wide, jewel-studded belt with an immense buckle; a brightly checked shirt topped by a blazing red

bandana. Briskly, he snapped a tall ten-gallon hat on his head, and stepped to the Time Door.

Gripping an ebony handle, he tugged upward. The huge metal door oiled slowly back. "Time," said Cydwick Ohms simply, gesturing toward the gray nothingness beyond the door.

The reporters and photographers surged forward, notebooks and cameras at the ready. "What if the door swings shut after you're gone?" one of them asked.

"A groundless fear, boy," assured Ohms. "I have seen to it that the Time Door can never be closed. And now—good-bye, gentlemen. Or, to use the proper colloquialism—*so long, hombres!*"

Ohms bowed from the waist, gave his ten-gallon hat a final tug, and took a single step forward.

And did *not* disappear.

He stood, blinking. Then he swore, beat upon the unyielding wall of grayness with clenched fists, and fell back, panting, to his desk.

"I've failed!" he moaned in a lost voice. "The C. Cydwick Ohms Time Door is a botch!" He buried his head in trembling hands.

The reporters and photographers began to file out.

Suddenly the professor raised his head. "*Listen!*" he warned.

A slow rumbling, muted with distance, emanated from the dense grayness of the Time Door. Faint yips and whoopings were distinct above the rumble. The sounds grew steadily—to a thousand beating drums—to a rolling sea of thunder!

Shrieking, the reporters and photographers scattered for the stairs.

Ah, another knotty problem to be solved, mused Professor Cydwick Ohms, swinging, with some difficulty, onto one of three thousand Texas steers stampeding into the laboratory.

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