Nicholas Nelson

by

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Nicholas Nelson had never obtained a college degree, or even gone to college, but he'd spent his entire life, from early childhood, studying physics. He knew more about physics than anybody else in the world, without exception. He was completely unknown within scientific circles, but he was the greatest physicist in the world.

Nicholas Nelson lived in the granny apartment behind his mother's house. He'd lived there for his entire adult life. He did his work in his mother's garage. He'd built all of his devices there, himself. It was a small space, but it contained devices that would have amazed even the scientists at CERN. The devices were small, and necessarily so, given his limited space and finances, but he could do things that the CERN scientists wouldn't have believed.

Nicholas Nelson intended to write a series of books, documenting his work, after the work was complete. He was waiting only to finish his last project, a time machine. After the series of books was published, he would be recognized, and rightly so, as the greatest physicist in the world.

Nicholas Nelson finished his time machine. He was so confident that it would work that he didn't even intend to test it on a rock or even on a cat. (His mother wouldn't let him anywhere near her cats.) He intended to actually take the maiden voyage himself.

Nicholas Nelson built a simple timer to click the activation switch for him, because he couldn't reach the switch from within his time machine's region of influence. He adjusted his time machine for five days in the future. He left a little note for his mother. He set the timer for 20 seconds and stepped into the region of influence. The time machine sent him five days into the future.

Nicholas Nelson had neglected one small circumstance of physics, or maybe he just never thought of it. Time and distance are totally unrelated. They're completely independent of one another. So, when Nicholas Nelson appeared in the future, he appeared at exactly the same location in the universe that he'd occupied before the transfer. Meanwhile, the solar system had spent five days following its long and lonely path around the galaxy, leaving that location far behind. Nicholas Nelson didn't live long enough, in the vacuum of free space, to understand what had happened. He might not have lived long enough to even notice.

Nicholas Nelson had exactly the same speed and direction, after his time transfer, as he'd had before it. Momentum and energy are always conserved. It's a law of physics. So, Nicholas Nelson spent quite a lot of time, thereafter, following his own long and lonely path around the galaxy, a path that somewhat approximated that of the solar system.

Nicholas Nelson's mother eventually rented the granny apartment to a college student studying at the local community college. The student had a car and needed the garage, so Nicholas Nelson's mother hired some day laborers to take the huge accumulation of junk out of the garage and haul it to the dump.

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