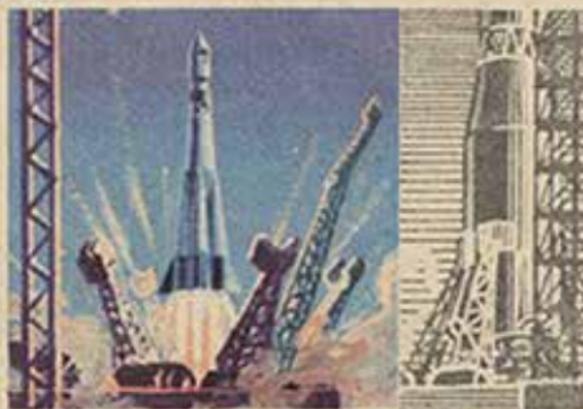
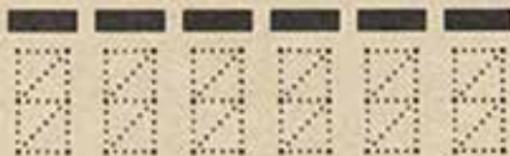


15 ЛЕТ АВИА
КОСМИЧЕСКОЙ ЭРЫ



Старт космического корабля «Восток-1», на котором Ю. А. Гагарин совершил первый в мире орбитальный космический полет.



Индекс предприятия связи места назначения

Куда _____

Кому _____

Wish I
Were There

Индекс предприятия связи и адрес
отправителя

by John Fuller

a positive chlamydia test alone would never have impelled me to squeeze into that old fridge. Nor the failed dissertation; or even the deep despair following my dad's unexpected death. It was more about getting to show I'd learned from my mistakes, absorbed life's hard lessons.

I was preparing my childhood home to be sold, keeping anything of my dad's I really valued, giving away what I could, and selling everything else. On May 1st anything left was going in the trash.

By the 25th, every room was nearly bare. Only the garage remained, congested with miscellany, including two refrigerators. Who on Earth has *two huge extra refrigerators*? I avoided them for days. I had almost a week, after all.

At last, only the behemoths inhabited the garage. Attempting to tilt the larger

one onto a dolly to roll away, I realised the fridges were bolted together. The door to the smaller one, furthermore, was welded shut. As in, sparks and special goggles welded.

The other sported an “open” button. Odd. I pushed it and heard the rising whine of motors starting up. Vacuum seals hissed derisively at me like I’d just said something preposterous, and the door popped open an inch.

Have you guessed? Time machine. My atomic physicist mother and my father the controls engineer must have built it. Had my dad been using it this whole time?

Operating the machine, which bore the engraved nameplate “Fugit”, seemed simplicity itself. One switch and three old-school clicking dials, labelled with curling yellow stickers. At a touch, the ancient

label *Power* fell off, the adhesive ossified long since. I flicked the toggle switch, and *Fugit* came to life. Not with flashing lights or boopy tones, but it vibrated mightily, and the garage lights failed. *Fugit* continued its start-up.

The dial *Years* was set to “30”. Hell no; I’d still be in diapers. “5” sounded good : I’d pick better dissertation advisors, have plenty of time left to tell my dad how much I loved him, and evade the chlamydia-squirting Morris Scott. Plus, I had the cutest bob ever when I was 26.

The next dial was *Parallax* (set to “193°”) and the fourth *Dampening*, (“Medium”). They seemed to have done the trick the last time *Fugit* was used, so I left those alone.

The vibration became a purr, and five minutes’ giddy anticipation saw a green LED illuminate beside each control. Red letters crept across a display : *R-E-A-D-Y
T-O T-R-A-N-S-P-O-R-T.*

“Shut the front door,” I murmured, then panicked when the door sealed shut on me. On the screen : 5—4—3—2—1—0.

All my bones hurt for a second, and then I opened my eyes. I was staring at a birthday cake with my name on it. *Nice aim, Mona!* I thought.

But something wasn't right; my brain felt...*cramped*. I was struggling to put thoughts together. I knew what I wanted to say, but only short, direct thoughts came; there was no finesse or complexity to my thinking.

“Blow out the candles, honey!” my mother said excitedly. This was a jolt : Mom had died fifteen years ago.

I looked down at my stubby fingers, a Snuffleupagus band-aid on one, and up at a banner reading, “YOU'RE FIVE!”, and heard my father's voice, youthful, amused.

“Nadine, I think Mona's been playing in the garage again.”

More Short Stories at dorknerdgeek.org

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Wish I Were There