

Neither Teller's memoirs nor these articles mention one of the most influential scientific achievements associated with him: the 1932 paper by Georg Rumer, Teller, and Hermann Weyl.¹ That work laid the foundation for the quantum theory of chemical valence by introducing what is now called the theory of resonance structures.

I learned about this work from Rumer, who later continued it alone.

An outstanding Russian physicist, Yuriy Borisovich Rumer (1901–85) was known in the West as Georg. He spent a few years in Germany just at the big bang of quantum mechanics. In a small booklet published in Novosibirsk to mark the 100th anniversary of Rumer's birth, one can find fragments of his recollections of his contacts with David Hilbert, Albert Einstein, Lev Landau, George Gamow, Max Born, John von Neu-

mann, and other great scientists. These recollections, carefully transcribed from tape recordings, preserved Rumer's colloquial style.

Rumer's life was full of adventures before Göttingen and very difficult afterward. He spent years in Stalin's prisons and in exile; see *The Quantum Generation: Highlights and Tragedies of the Golden Age of Physics* by Margarita Ryutova-Kemoklidze (Springer,



Albert Einstein to His Son Hans Albert

Annotated by Engelbert Schucking and translated by Bertram Schwarzschild

(See the article by Schucking and Alex Harvey on page 34.)

I inherited this postcard from my father, Lothar Engelbert Schücking (1873–1943). He was a lawyer in Dortmund, Germany, when Einstein's elder son, Hans Albert (1904–73), consulted him on a legal matter. Hans Albert was working as an engineer in Dortmund at the time. Because he couldn't afford to pay for the consultation, he agreed instead to provide my father with his father's autograph.

On 24 January 1929, my father wrote to prompt him: "May I respectfully remind you that, in return for legal consultation, you promised to give me for my autograph collection something written by your famous father in his own hand."

Hans Albert replied on 11 March: "From here it was not easy to obtain something from my father, since he is very peculiar in this respect. Also, I was delayed by relocation, influenza, and a death in the family. I ask you, therefore, to excuse the delay, and I hope I can satisfy your request with the attached piece of writing."

The card was written at the apogee of Einstein's fame. Three days earlier, the Prussian Academy of Sciences had published a six-page paper by him (Proc. Pruss. Acad. Sci., 1929, p. 2) about unifying gravity and electromagnetism. The paper made headlines worldwide.

Berlin–Charlottenburg, 2 February 1929

Dear Albert:

I'm glad that your profession gives you so much satisfaction. Let me know what expenses you had for the piano so I can reimburse you. I wasn't able to [cover the moving expenses] from here. I like this piano. These things have become quite expensive. We got it in a small store. It was a unique opportunity. To find something like that, one has to search all the smaller stores, read ads, phone around, negotiate.

My heartfelt condolence to your wife [Frieda] on her great loss. We're buying a small summer house in Ferch near Berlin, where the sailing is lovely. This will also be good for you both. We want to live there like gypsies from May till September.

You can pass on this postcard as an autograph.

Love,
Your Papa.

Einstein never did buy the summer house in Ferch, a lakeside town 12 km southwest of the Berlin suburb of Potsdam. As far as I know, his plan to buy a house just six weeks before the City of Berlin offered to give him one as a 50th birthday present is not mentioned in the standard Einstein literature. He apparently dropped that plan and accepted the mayor's offer. But the offer turned into such a bizarre comedy of errors, bureaucratic incompetence, and local politics that Einstein finally turned it down and built a house on his own, in Caputh near Ferch.

