

BOOK REVIEW

Selection of books for review is based on the editors' opinions regarding possible reader interest and on the availability of the book to the editors. Occasional selections may include books on topics somewhat peripheral to the subject matter ordinarily considered acceptable.



FROM AACH TO ZYGMUND

Title World Who's Who in Science
Editor Allen G. Debus
Publisher Marquis-Who's Who, Inc.,
1968
Pages xvi + 1855
Price \$46.50
Reviewer L. G. Stang, Jr.

One of the many rewards of being an Editor and one of the few that are tangible lies in the fact that, in assigning books for review, the Editor can always reserve certain choice ones for himself to review. Such is the case of *World Who's Who in Science*. This book carries the subtitle *From Antiquity to the Present*, and therein is the key to a book that is not only very useful but one that, we predict, will also be quite successful financially. At an average of 17 names per page, we figure there must be 31 535 names listed, give or take a few. Now, not all of these people are going to rush out and buy a copy, because many of them are dead, some having achieved that state 2500 years ago. However, that is just the point: Who would not like to be listed in the same book with Archimedes, Aristotle, Einstein, Galileo, Newton, Socrates, and Stang? It

makes the pulse quicken and the head a little light. What a thing to leave casually lying around on the coffee table when the bank president comes over for cocktails—especially when, with a little judicious prior manipulation, one can train the book to fall open at the proper page!

However, we suppose it is only fair to note that if we are going to bask in the reflected glory of being listed with Leonardo Da Vinci, we must also bear some of the shame of being in the same book with Klaus Fuchs. In fact, we were about to gloat over the fact that we rated more lines than Socrates, when we noted with shock (our education in history left much to be desired) that Socrates was sentenced to death for offending public morality. You who are up on your history no doubt know the whole story, but did you also know that John J. Audubon, famed artist and ornithologist, was born without his parents having the benefit of wedlock; yet, there he is on page 75, with half again as much space as we rated.

Actually, as noted in the Preface, the length of a listing in this book often has no bearing on the quality or quantity of the biographee's work. It is strongly influenced by what is available. Certain contemporary editors can be depressingly garrulous when the occasion suits them, and someone who lived a few hundred years BC would be at a disadvantage in having no opportunity for rebuttal.

A useful feature of the book is a complete listing of all Nobel Prize

winners in physics, chemistry, and medicine, on the inside covers.

Nevertheless, even though the publisher's judgment as to whom to include may have been less than perfect and even though one should not attempt to read too much into the relative length of the listings (for it takes as much space to record the name of one's child as the name of an average book, and yet it has been our experience that writing a book required more talent), it probably should be emphasized that this book is intended as more of a listing than a critique and that, if the person you are looking up is in there at all, the information given about him will be highly useful to many types of people, including Editors and other confidence artists.

On the other hand, we should not convey the impression that everything about the book is completely satisfactory. Obviously not every qualified name could be listed in a single volume such as this, but the omission of certain ones seems quite unfortunate. The missing include, for example, some of the past and present top echelon people in the ANS (and also at BNL), some of the recipients of the E. O. Lawrence Award, and some of the co-discoverers of particular chemical elements. These omissions are all the more unfortunate when it is realized that Silas Little, American forester who has published on the lublolly pine and other trees, is listed twice; we have no objection to one listing, but twice, yet?