

BOOK REVIEW

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



The Rickover Effect: How One Man Made a Difference

Author Theodore Rockwell
Publisher Naval Institute Press, Annapolis (1992)
Price \$24.95
Reviewer Theodore J. Iltis

Numerous books and countless articles have been written about the development of naval nuclear propulsion and about the man who sired and masterfully nurtured that development, Hyman George Rickover. It has always struck me (but not surprised me) that nearly all of these writings have been by persons who, themselves, had not lived and worked for many years, day and night, in and out, within the sanctum of Code 390/NRB (Naval Reactors Branch),—Rickover's inner office at Main Navy and the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington, D.C. It hasn't surprised me because (a) there weren't many of us who had that long-term experience, and (b) those of us who had it knew there was no one better qualified to write about the essence of "HGR" than Ted Rockwell.

Rickover himself was a prodigious reader and writer; he practiced and demanded excellence of articulation, accuracy, honesty, succinctness, and order in everything we wrote to him, for him, or to anyone else. He demanded a "pink" copy of everything typed in NRB (draft or otherwise) so that he could read it that day (or night) and flag any weaknesses immediately. Standard format for a memo to HGR was one page, Facts, Discussion, Action. Standard format for a meeting report was Agreements & Commitments (and it was preferable to write these *before* the meeting).

Rockwell was HGR's prize disciple in the art of the written word. He was the first to receive the coveted official HGR "Degree in Word Engineering." Readers of *The Rickover Effect* will understand why. Rockwell has remarkably cap-

tured, in format and in text, the essence of "a man who changed the world" and how he did it. This book is not just a history of accomplishments or a biography; it is much more. It gives us insights into the vision, philosophy, ethics, methods, and values behind the history and biography of a great man. Most importantly, Rockwell articulates the lasting impact and influence of that man on other people; not just in nuclear energy but in many walks of life; not just here but throughout the nation and beyond; and not just then but now and into the future as well.

True to his form as a specialist in "The Art of Plain Talk" (a la Rudolph Flesch), Rockwell has made the book thoroughly understandable, entertaining, thought provoking, and stimulating to anyone and everyone. For those associated in any way with the pioneering and progress of nuclear technology, it is a special treat; and for those of us associated with Rickover and the Naval Reactors Program, it is a priceless treasure!

Theodore J. Iltis, starting fresh with a chemical engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin, served on Hyman G. Rickover's immediate staff for a term of 15 years (1951 to 1965), concurrent with and in the footsteps of Theodore Rockwell. At midterm, he became Rickover's Director of Nuclear Technology, and he concluded his term as Rickover's personal representative in the search for the Thresher. He played leading roles in the chemistry and oxide fuel development for Shippingport as well as pioneering the chemistry, shielding, decontamination, and radiological controls for the nuclear fleet and its support facilities. In 1965, he was appointed U.S. Senior Scientific Representative to Euratom (Brussels, Belgium), and in 1969, he became U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Senior Representative for the breeder reactor development at Westinghouse Advanced Reactors Division (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). In 1978, he ended his government career to become Director of Advanced Technology and Nuclear Affairs for Wisconsin Power & Light Company (Madison, Wisconsin) until retirement in 1987.