Compared with other biographies about Taylor, however, the Wrege and Greenwood offering is a step forward. We see more of Taylor as an individual and family man, and of the influences that impelled him. We see his strong-willed independence which served to promote his efforts when they were resisted, and also led him to reject his share of his father’s million dollar estate because Taylor said he “didn’t need it [the money]” (p. 223) He could make friends and enemies equally well and never seemed to forget the difference. He often talked roughly, a habit acquired during his years as a worker, but also one which disturbed Louise Taylor and was targeted for expurgation in the Copley version of Taylor’s life.

“Taylor’s legacy,” the last section of the Wrege and Greenwood book, should be required reading for all students, teachers, and practitioners of management. Taylor’s flaws and strengths, his central role in giving a voice and providing inspiration to others during this period in history, and his continuing influence on the study and practice of contemporary management are excellently summarized. This biography should separate once and for all time the “myth” from the “reality” of Frederick W. Taylor, the Father of Scientific Management.

Management Laureates: A Collection of Autobiographical Essays (3 volumes)

Reviewed by Daniel A. Wren, University of Oklahoma

Book Review

This collection of autobiographical essays is a creative project. No other publication in management has asked leading contributors to reflect on their experiences and the factors and forces that influenced their professional and personal development. Each essay is accompanied by a photograph and complete bibliography of each individual’s work. The thirty-four autobiographies represent the editor’s selection of “management laureates,” those who have achieved distinction in research and publication, teaching, and consulting. These laureates are holders of distinguished professorships—almost all are Fellows of the Academy of Management, some have been presidents of the Academy of Management, and others have distinguished themselves professionally. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to read one of our scholarly journals without finding at least one of these individuals cited.

The laureates come from different disciplines and have made contributions in a variety of management-related topics—leadership, motivation, human resource management, strategic management, production/operations management, and systems theory. The editor suggests that those chosen represent only a sample of distinguished individuals in management. No criteria are provided for how these particular individuals were selected, but careful reading will reveal that those selected are indeed distinguished contributors to the management discipline.

Steiner, George Strauss, Eric L. Trist, Stanley C. Vance, Victor H. Vroom, Karl E. Weick, William Foote Whyte, and James C. Worthy

Of the thirty-four laureates, thirteen of them received their doctorates in psychology, two hold doctorates in sociology or anthropology, one in mathematics, one in engineering, one in history, one in political science, thirteen from business schools, and two have no Ph.D. but led distinguished careers in business and government before beginning academic life. The bias toward the behavioral sciences does not appear to have been deliberate but more likely reflects the direction the Academy of Management has taken in the past two to three decades. The reader can expect, however, to read more about those whose contributions are for the behavioral aspects of management and less about strategic management, production, or general management.

The individuals' essays are not standardized but follow a fairly typical theme of presenting their family background, the circumstances of growing up and how that influenced their life choices, their education, academic affiliation, work and/or consulting experiences, mentors or colleagues who influenced them, and publications and career development. These behind the scenes glimpses of how the laureates shaped their view of the world are insightful and enlightening. Through these recollections it is possible to confirm that knowledge builds on knowledge as each individual traces the people and ideas that influenced their thinking as well as their influence on students who are currently making their mark in management. One senses the cross-generational evolution of management thought and reflects, as one contributor quotes Gilbert Highet, that teaching is "the immortal profession."

As these laureates influenced their times they were also the product of the times in which they were nurtured. Those who came to the management discipline before the 1960s contributed to business policy and strategy and general management, stressed the practice of management, and used field studies and cases for research. Those who emerged after the 1960s were more likely to come from the behavioral sciences, be consultants, and used simulated or controlled lab experimentation in research.

A majority of the laureates took their task of retrospection seriously and reveal themselves with candor. While any autobiography can be dangerous—such as engaging in selective memory and making attributional errors—this collection appears to avoid flights of fancy or intellectual ramblings. Readers who know these individuals will have to judge the caliber of their self-reporting but the Gestalt of the essays is one of accuracy and thorough introspection.

The essays also provide an enjoyable excursion into the highlights of their lives—family, friends, colleagues, awards, travels, and other events that shaped their ideas. Here also is the downside of the lives of some—the loss of loved ones, alcoholism, physical handicaps, life-threatening illnesses, divorces, and other events that deflected career paths but were overcome. The laureates came from a variety of backgrounds; some were born poor, some came from relatively well-to-do families; some started their education at relatively obscure colleges, others went to prep schools and the prestigious colleges, some started as practitioners, others came directly to academia, and at least three can be identified who fled Hitler's Germany because of anti-Semitism before World War II. The only common thread is their drive to achieve, seize opportunities, establish collegial relationships, and never be satisfied with the way things are.

The essays of these laureates will be interesting to a wide range of readers—students, academicians, and practitioners. Through the essays we get to know both the people and ideas which have influenced the course of
management teaching and practice. As these individuals speak of their intellectual legacy, they are simultaneously helping to develop the researchers, teachers, and practitioners of tomorrow. Each of us can better understand the contributions of these laureates by knowing something about them as people. Most of what we know about these individuals has been gathered from the flyleaf of a book, a note at the end of an article, or the sterilized linear format of a Who’s Who. Management Laureates provides the opportunities for in-depth, introspective revelations about individuals who are among the contemporary leaders in the management discipline.

The editor acknowledges that the laureates are exclusively male and North American. This was not deliberate, but reflects the fact that those who have established their distinguished careers over an extensive number of years did so during an era when management thought was an American product, primarily, and the body of scholars was male, primarily. This fact will change, however, with the growing number of female scholars in the field and with the continuing globalization of management. It is unfortunate that there appears to be no Lillian M. Gilbreth, Mary P. Follett, nor Mary Gilson among us today. One also wonders why the collection is dominated by academicians and did not include individuals such as Peter F. Drucker, William Edwards Deming, and Joseph M. Juran, who have made distinguished contributions to the practice of management both nationally and internationally. Perhaps future laureates will include more contributions from our female members as well as those who have influenced the practice of management throughout the world.

The editor’s preface provides an excellent introduction and a firm intellectual formulation for the contribution that autobiographies can make as the building blocks for the study of management. This is not a history book, but a book about how history is in the making. It is a book for a broad spectrum of readers—neophytes, those who hope to become a laureate, and those who want to know more about the individuals who have contributed to the ideas and the practices of management. Select and read to enjoy these essays—it will be a rewarding experience.