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The Class of '02

COLLEGES and universities customarily boast about distinguished alumni, and it is not inappropriate—or unbecoming—for the AAAS to boast a little about its older members. When the names of those scientists who are completing their fiftieth year of continuous membership in the Association were read at the Bloomington (Indiana) meeting of the Executive Committee, it was unanimously voted to pay tribute to them in the pages of *SCIENCE*.

There are 67 who joined the AAAS in 1902. Three of them are women. All but three of the number contributed so substantially to their respective fields of science as to have earned the rank of Fellow—not that this is especially important, because fifty years of membership reflects a sustained interest that is, in itself, a contribution to the advancement of science.

An analysis of the group would unquestionably be rewarding, but in this brief tribute only superficial impressions can be imparted. If it be assumed that all of them entered the Association at the tender age of twenty-five, each one would be seventy-five years old. Nearly three quarters of them have led academic, but not necessarily ivory-towered, lives—witness Anton J. Carlson, president of the Association in 1944. Nearly all have retired from teaching, but not from research, as the current work that Albert F. Blakeslee, president of the Association in 1940, is doing in plant genetics amply demonstrates. A few, like George B. Pegram, of Columbia University, are only now passing heavy administrative burdens on to younger shoulders.

At least seven of the 67 have given their talents to government agencies, although Austin H. Clark had plenty of energy and ingenuity to aid the AAAS in its first efforts to inform the public about scientists and their research. Of the other six, five are geologists, including W. C. Mendenhall, former director of the

U. S. Geological Survey and immediate predecessor of the present treasurer of the AAAS. Rudolf Ruedemann, who served the New York State Museum as paleontologist for many years, is the only representative of the state surveys, for George H. Ashley, long state geologist of Pennsylvania and also a member since 1902, died at the age of eighty-four on May 28.

One is tempted to speculate on the secret of longevity, but it is obvious that the profession of scientist per se is not the answer. During the past five months *SCIENCE* has reported the deaths of 330 scientists and engineers whose ages were known. The average age was 68.3—a figure that indicates simply that the scientist may expect to live until he approximates the standard threescore years and ten. Distribution by fields of specialization is interesting but inconclusive, for there is no information as to the proportions of members among the several sciences in 1902. It may, however, be noted that 13 were zoologists, 12 geologists, 11 chemists, 9 botanists, 7 physicists, and 6 members of the medical profession. The natural scientists, or naturalists, might claim superior survival characteristics from these fragmentary statistics, but the claim cannot be scientifically supported.

Had this note been written by a science writer, it would have been headlined differently, and its entire content would have been subordinated to the headline member of the Class of '02. Had it been prepared by a novelist, the element of suspense would have been introduced much sooner. The group's most distinguished figure virtually abandoned the engineering profession many years ago, though he never ceased to use its exacting principles or to observe its rigid standards in public life. He even lists engineering as his second choice among the Association's sections—his first is Section K, the social sciences. He is Herbert Clark Hoover.

HOWARD A. MEYERHOFF

Administrative Secretary

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