

**Mac Lane, Saunders**

**Saunders Mac Lane: a mathematical autobiography.** (English) Zbl 1089.01010  
Wellesley, MA: A K Peters (ISBN 1-56881-150-0/hbk). xvi, 358 p. (2005).

The sixty-four brief chapters of Saunders Mac Lane's mathematical autobiography contain much that will be of interest to all readers, no matter what their prior mathematical background. The chapters – generally ten pages or less – are organized into fifteen parts: Early Years (six chapter); First Teaching (five chapters); Collaborative Re-search (three chapters); The War Years (three chapters); Eilenberg and Mac Lane (three chapters); Harvard Years (five chapters); Chicago in the Fifties (six chapters); Mathematical Developments (six chapters); National Academy of Science (four chapters); The Sixties and Beyond (five chapters); National Science Policy (six chapters); Travels (three chapters); Advising (four chapters); Later Developments (three chapters); Contemplating (three chapters).

The majority of the chapters are biographical, properly speaking. Other chapters are more or less mathematical in nature. The mathematical content of the more technical chapters will likely be beyond the understanding of general readers. For example, Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen contain a number of examples of short exact sequences of groups as well as commutative diagrams of mappings. That being said, most readers, whatever their level of mathematical preparation, will nevertheless come to know something of the life, personality, and work of one of the most significant Twentieth Century mathematicians.

The autobiography is a delightful mix of the personal and professional aspects of Mac Lane's long and distinguished career. Even a casual reader who merely samples some of the chapters will be treated to a kaleidoscopic tour of important mathematical personalities, universities and other research centers, and issues having a significant impact on the development of mathematics, research, and teaching. The more technical portions of this book notwithstanding, it is definitely a book that belongs on the shelves not only of all university libraries but also all high school and public libraries as well.

Reviewer: [F. J. Papp \(Ann Arbor\)](#)

**MSC:**

- [01A70](#) Biographies, obituaries, personalia, bibliographies
- [01A60](#) History of mathematics in the 20th century
- [01A65](#) Development of contemporary mathematics
- [00-02](#) Research exposition (monographs, survey articles) pertaining to mathematics in general
- [01A72](#) Schools of mathematics
- [01A73](#) History of mathematics at specific universities
- [01A74](#) History of mathematics at institutions and academies (non-university)
- [01A80](#) Sociology (and profession) of mathematics

Cited in **13** Documents

**Keywords:**

[autobiography](#)