

The Owl, the Elephant, and the Other Side of the Mountain: An Academic Odyssey, by Virgil Lagomarcino. Ames: March Lake Press, 1997; distributed by Iowa State University Press. xi, 173 pp. Illustrations. \$14.95 paper.

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Anyone who has been involved in the world of education should enjoy this delightful "academic odyssey" as it is remembered by one of Iowa's most honored academicians. Honored indeed, for there are few university professors or administrators for whom a major campus building has been named while the honoree is still very much alive. Surely no one has been more clearly identified with Iowa State University than has Virgil Lagomarcino. He is one of those rare individuals whose presence has made the institution of which he has been a part a different—and better—place.

Summing up a lifetime of teaching and academic administration, Lagomarcino has produced a thoroughly readable volume. It is not quite autobiography, nor is it altogether a memoir, neither social nor political commentary, nor wholly philosophy; rather it is a felicitous combination of all of these. Lagomarcino recounts with zest his career in education, relishing his (mostly happy) encounters with small-town school boards, university colleagues and administrators, students, athletic coaches, and even some state legislators. With wit and humor he tells of experiences near and far, from teaching in a rural Iowa high school to serving as a consultant all over America and in places such as Egypt and the Soviet Union.

From these pages emerges the spirit of a man who loves life and lives it to its fullest, who has genuinely liked nearly everyone he has ever met. Or it may be that he is simply kind enough to omit reference to those he has found wanting. In any case, he has loved learning and laughter; he has loved Socrates with reservations and golf with no reservations. And throughout his distinguished career, he seems to have tried valiantly, and successfully, not to take himself too seriously.

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