wife Priscilla). Luminous matter in the universe is found concentrated in vast assemblages called galaxies. The Milky Way is the descriptive, historical name of the galaxy in which our Sun and its planets are contained. We have learned that the Milky Way contains some 100 billion stars, distributed over dimensions of about 100 000 light years. We know that the Milky Way also contains gas and dust, that it is rotating about a nucleus located some 30 000 light years distant from the Sun;

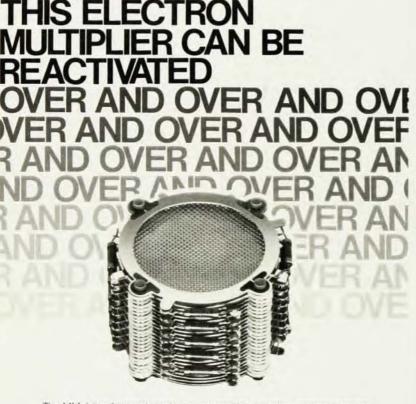
and that some stars, especially the younger and more luminous ones, are distributed in a flat, spiral pattern. These and other discoveries and further questions are all described in this splendid book. The fifth edition is not a reorganization of the material but rather an updated version of the fourth edition, which was published in 1974. Bok says that the book is aimed at "beginning college students and at bright boys and girls of high-school age." I feel it is more appropriate for

advanced college students and educated people without much astronomical background. The book presupposes no background and introduces the necessary basic astronomical concepts in the first few chapters. Subsequent chapters deal with stellar populations, clusters, galactic rotation, the galactic nucleus, interstellar gas and dust, spiral structure and, finally, a bit of galactic evolution.

The writing style is clear, fresh and personal; indeed, at times one can almost hear Bart speaking. Those (many!) conjectures that are not yet definitely established are always qualified with phrases such as "most likely," "in all probability," and "we think that." I like this because I feel it is important to distinguish between what we know and what we don't know. Too often astronomers present as facts what are really only currently accepted (fashionable) theories.

The only negative comment I have about this latest edition is that I find the format (type face, double columns, larger-scale illustrations) of the fourth edition more attractive. If you don't have a copy of the fourth, and are interested in learning about our galaxy and current galactic research, the fifth edition of Bok's *The Milky Way* is the finest introduction available.

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