

rings true all the way. Elegantly and generously—almost no names are given—the path is described. At the end, the main offending characters are the French “Grandes Écoles” system of elite universities and even more so CERN’s theory division, which is still without a single female senior staff member. In contrast, CERN’s first female experimental senior staff member, Fabiola Gianotti, was hired in 1994; last month, she became the organization’s director general.

The fact that Gaillard was not granted a permanent position is probably the main reason she left CERN, to its loss, and accepted a professorship at the University of California, Berkeley. The story of her time at CERN unfolds over a background of such blatant failures as the continued absence of a nursery—still missing, in spite of multiple requests since Gaillard’s time—and a take-for-granted and patronizing attitude toward women.

The author is exceptional not only for her scientific stature but also for her human characteristics. Although the quality and relevance of her work were as obvious as the injustice of her professional situation prior to job offers from Berkeley and from Fermilab, she was not discouraged; her driving force is clearly physics, not medals. My impression is that she kept her sense of humor in the face of the many nonsensical situations and comments she had to endure. I can imagine Gaillard telling herself: “Here is this guy again with the usual impertinences, but all I really want is to finish my computation.”

A Singularly Unfeminine Profession is priceless in transmitting the most intangible but crucial aspects of how discrimination and prejudice act even on those well intended and determined not to fall into the traps. It should be illuminating to anybody concerned about discrimination in science. The repeated examples of the gender-based double standard when evaluating candidates’ strengths are as illustrative as the uncalled-for “explanations” from her friends and colleagues about her job situation.

A rich addition to the literature on the history of the standard model and a must-have testimony of a pioneering woman, this well-written book can be read in one sitting. It contains some excellent explanations of the physics involved, which will be accessible mainly

to a particle-physics audience. The brush strokes on the author’s life and work allow us to glimpse a scientist and a human being of enormous stature, an inspiring role model for all.

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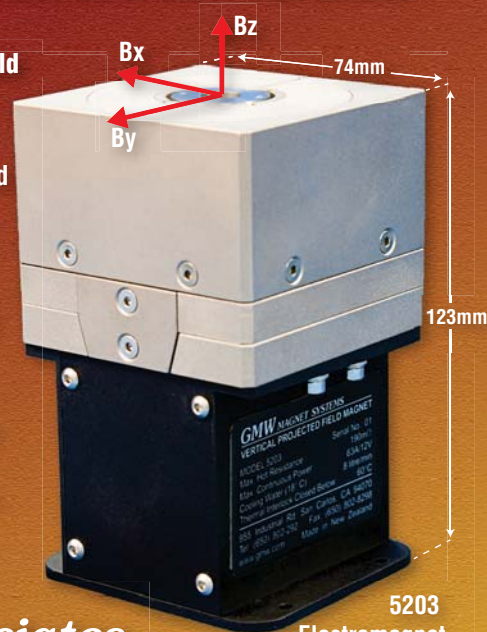
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