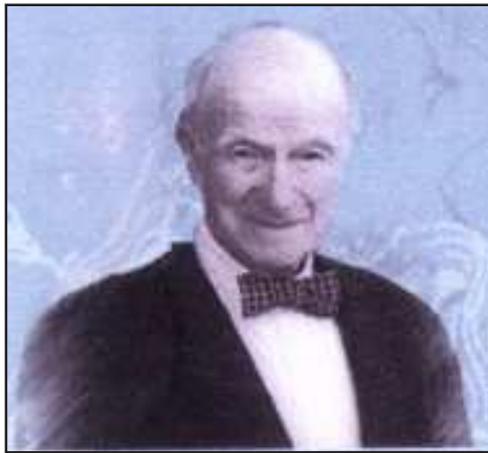


UNESCO – Kalinga Prize Winner – 1962

Gerard Piel
Pioneer in Science Journalism



**[Birth : Woodmore, New York 1.3.1915
Death : Queens, New York City 7.9.2004]**

The Most Remarkable Discovery made by Scientists is Science itself

....Gerard Piel.

**Science shall occupy the same Place in the mind of every thinking
citizen that it occupies as an integral part of our modern civilization**

....Gerard Piel

Gerard Piel Biography

Dr. Gerard Piel (1 March, 1915-September 7, 2004) was a pioneer in science journalism. He bought the magazine Scientific American in 1947 and became its chairman in 1980. In 1986 he became the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

He was born in Woodmere, New York and died in Mount Sinai Hospital in Queens, New York City.

Dr. Piel also wrote for various magazines, including The Nation.

Quote :

“The most remarkable discovery made by scientists is science itself.”

Books :

- The Age of Science: What We Learned in the 20th Century
- Science in the Cause of Man
- The Acceleration of History
- Only One World
- The World of Rene Dubos: A Collection of His Writings

Tributes by Scientific American

September 9, 2004

Gerard Piel, Former Publisher and Chairman of Scientific American (1915-2004)

Gerard Piel, the former publisher of Scientific American who helped reinvent this magazine and redefine the modern era of science journalism, died on Sept. 7 at the age of 89. The cause was lingering complications from a stroke he suffered this past February.

Although Piel never formally studied science—he graduated from Harvard magna cum laude as a history major—his influence over science literacy worldwide cannot be overstated. For six years in the 1940s he worked as the science editor at Life magazine, reaching an audience of millions. Then in 1947 he, fellow journalists Dennis Flanagan and Donald H. Miller, and a group of investors purchased Scientific American. That already venerable magazine had published accounts of inventions and discoveries since 1845, but its new owners had more ambitious plans.

Piel as publisher, Flanagan as editor and Miller as general manager remade the magazine into a more sophisticated, authoritative monthly in which the feature articles were routinely written by experts in those subjects, yet were intended for an educated general public instead of a purely professional one. This new formula for Scientific American proved hugely successful, especially in what became the “space race” era of international technological competitiveness, and Piel saw the magazine’s readership grow through the 1970s.

Gerard Piel believed strongly that the entire world should participate and share in the benefits of scientific enterprise. For that reason, he aggressively sought partners outside the U.S. to publish Scientific American in other countries and languages. Thanks in part to his initiative, editions of Scientific American are today published in 18 nations. As publisher of Scientific American, Piel became a roving ambassador of good will for science, and he sometimes tapped other staffers of the magazine to join him: longtime employees fondly remember times in the late 1970s when Piel brought the entire staff with him on trips through the then-Soviet Union and China.

For Piel, scientific reason also deserved to be a beacon for political reform and good governance. Throughout the 1970s, for example, the magazine published a string of articles arguing for international nuclear disarmament and a reassessment of the politics of mutually assured destruction.

In 1984 Piel stepped away from his day-to-day duties as publisher and assumed the role of chairman of Scientific American, which he continued to hold for another decade. Nevertheless, he continued to write and speak about science. During this time he authored *The Age of Science: What Scientists Learned in the 20th Century* (2001) and *Only One World* (1992) and co-edited *The World of Rene Dubos: A Collection of His Writings* (1990). (These books joined his earlier works, *Science in the Cause of Man* (1962) and *The Acceleration of History* (1972).

In addition, Piel held many other positions of note throughout his career, including president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and membership on the boards of the American Museum of Natural History, the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation and the Mayo Clinic.

Those of us who had the fortune to have known or met Gerard Piel are saddened now to have lost him. He was a landmark figure in journalistic letters, and he directly promoted the growth of science as much as any one person could. – The Editors.

**Tributes by
American Association for the Advancement Science(AAAS)
8 September 2004**

**Gerard Piel, Former Publisher of Scientific American,
Dies at Age 89**



Gerard Piel, 89, a past president of AAAS and the publisher best remembered for infusing life into Scientific American, died of complications from a stroke on 7 September at Mount Sinai Hospital in Queens, NY.

Piel virtually invented modern science journalism. He believed that combining the highest standards of science with the best traditions of journalism could enlighten the public. His aim was known to many – that “science shall occupy the same place in the mind of every thinking citizen that it occupies as an integral part of our modern civilization.”

Piel was born into a brewing family, Piel Brothers Brewery, on 1 March 1915, in Woodmere, NY. In 1937, he earned his bachelor’s degree in history from Harvard University, graduating magna cum laude.

He began his career as an editorial trainee at Time Inc. In his six years at Life Inc., Piel was eventually promoted to science editor for Life magazine. In his 2001 book “The Age of Science,” Piel confessed that he had the most unlikely scientific preparation. He was America’s foremost nonscientist, acquiring knowledge in many disciplines of science. The New York Times once reported that his history of scientific discovery in the twentieth century was similar to a text for general science.

Piel borrowed money to buy Scientific American in 1947. The publication, established in 1845, had reached a lull in its popularity. Piel took over the periodical just after World War II, made it over, and four years after his purchase, the magazine showed a profit. During his tenure as publisher, circulation topped one million.

In 1984, Piel became the chairman of the company, and two years later oversaw the sale of the magazine to Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck, a giant German publishing enterprise and its current publisher.

For 1985-1987, Piel served as AAAS President and Chairman and was the first journalist to head the organization. He presided over the 152nd AAAS Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. Piel was a passionate advocate for more federal support of science education in primary and secondary schools and felt AAAS should mount a campaign for the national reform of science education.

Apart from his career in publishing, he served as an overseer at Harvard University, a trustee at Radcliff College, and on the boards of Phillips Andover Academy, the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, the Mayo Clinic, the American Museum of Natural History and the New York Botanical Garden. He also received more than twenty honorary doctorates and numerous awards in the scientific community.

A prolific writer, Piel authored several books, most recently "The Age of Science: What Scientists Learned in the 20th Century" (Basic Books, 2001), Other titles included "Science in the Cause of Man" (Knopf, 1962), "The Acceleration of History" (Knopf, 1972) and "Only One World" (Freeman, 1992). He was co-editor of "The World of Rene Dubos: A Collection of His Writings" (Holt, 1990).

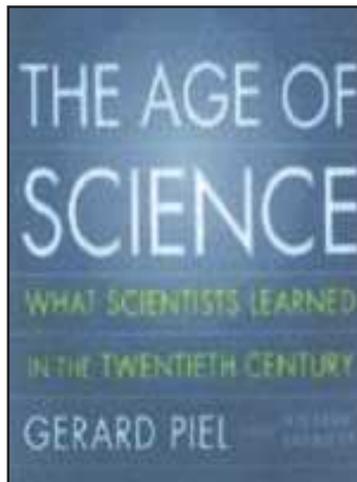
Piel is survived by his wife, Eleanor Jackson Piel, a civil rights attorney; a daughter, Eleanor P. Womack of California; a son, Jonathan B. Piel of Manhattan; 11 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**- Monica Amarelo
8 September, 2004**



**The Age of Science :
What Scientists Learned in the Twentieth Century
by Gerard Piel
Basic Books; \$40.00 ; 400 pp.
ISBN 0465057551**

BOOK REVIEW



Gerard Piel, the founding editor of Scientific American, started his career with a degree in history, which prepared him admirably to be a “spectator at the inquiry after knowledge.” His eminently accessible survey of the achievements of the second half of the twentieth century is as astonishingly erudite work of explanatory journalism that is never ponderous.

In 1947, Gerard Piel became one of the founders of the revived Scientific American and stood at the helm as its publisher for 39 years. In this time, the magazine earned a reputation as one of the best sources for accessible, entertaining, and illuminating scientific information.

His position also gave Piel an unparalleled view of the most exciting scientific findings – and the people who made them – during those decades and the years since.

When historians of the future examine Western civilization in the 20th century, one area of intellectual accomplishment will stand out above all others: more than any era before it, this century was an age of science. Not only were the practical details of daily life radically transformed by the application of scientific discoveries, but our very sense of who we are, how our minds work, how our world came to

be, how it works our proper role in it, our ultimate origins, and our ultimate fate were all influenced by scientific thinking as never before in human history.

In *The Age of Science*, Piel gives us a sweeping overview of the scientific achievements of the 20th century, with chapters on the fundamental forces of nature, the subatomic world, cosmology, the cell and molecular biology, earth history and the evolution of life, and human evolution. Piel also offers a glimpse of where mankind is headed, and how science will be crucial in coping with the world’s growing populations and dwindling food and energy sources.

Beautifully written and illustrated, *The Age of Science* is a book for the connoisseur as well as the hobbyist: an elegant, magisterial summation of one of the 20th century’s greatest cultural achievements, written by a man able to witness them.

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**The Age of Science :
What Scientist Learned in the Twentieth Century
by Gerard Piel**

Oct 4, 2001

Hardcover

US\$40.00

CAN \$59.95

UK £30.50

0465057551

Published by Basic Books

BOOK REVIEW

Description :

When historians of the future come to examine western civilization in the twentieth century, one area of intellectual accomplishment will stand out above all others: more than any other era before it, the twentieth century was an age of science. Not only were the of scientific discoveries, but our very sense of who we are, how our minds work, how our world came to be, how it works and our proper role in it, our ultimate origins, and our ultimate fate were all influenced by scientific thinking as never before in human history. In the age of science, the former editor and publisher of Scientific American gives us a sweeping overview of the scientific achievements of the twentieth century, with chapters on the fundamental forces of nature, the subatomic world, cosmology, the cell and molecular biology, earth history and the evolution of life, and human evolution. Beautifully written and illustrated, this is a book for the connoisseur: an elegant, informative, magisterial summation of one of the twentieth century's greatest cultural achievements.

Reviews :

"I love the manuscript. The flair and inspiration of the old Scientific American have resurfaced with great aplomb."

-Lynn Margulis, Author of What is Life? And Symbiotic Planet

"Gerard Piel describes science and scientists as he-no scientist but a clear and happy writer and an attentive expositor-judges the work. Chapter by chapter he summarizes their persona and their methods, sees space and time in four dimensions, particles, quantum theory, astronomy and cosmology, the living cell, geology, and the rise and evolution of our own sapient species. This work is both personal enough to engage anyone, and precise enough to carry the science at a worthy level. It deserves and will find a large audience."

- Philip Morrison

"The Age of Science...has a permanent pedestal in my homestead...At a time in history when science has given us the option of extending life and colonizing the universe or exterminating populations

Glossary on Kalinga Prize Laureates

had destroying the planet, it is a book to keep close at hand.”

– **Flaut**

“It’s a long amazing trip. And well worth the pricey ticket of time and money.”

– **The Washington Post**

“Presents a sweeping overview of the scientific achievements of the twentieth century, by the legendary former publisher of Scientific American.”

– **Space Times**

“Intended for a wide audience, this well-illustrated book presents the major developments of the century in all fields of science, including physics, astronomy, biology, earth sciences and human sciences. While the underlying principles are certainly covered from both a scientific and a historical viewpoint, the reader also will feel a sense of awe and pride. Piel’s engaging style makes science accessible to all, clearly bestowing the recognition that science is a noble enterprise that impact all positively.”

– **The Tampa Tribune**

“Forgoing the strict chronological arrangement or biographical focus of other recent works on 20th-Century science, Piel’s broad survey explores quantum mechanics, subatomic particles, astrophysics, genetics, cell biology, planetary geology, and evolution... Suitable for academic and larger public libraries.”

– **Wade M. Lee, University of Toledo Library, Ohio**

“A narrative that demonstrates not only his intimate knowledge of complex issues...but more significantly takes advantage of his formidable talent for making difficult concepts accessible to the general reader...One of the best introductions I’ve seen to the world of science and it’s practitioners...Easily the most intelligent, lucid and sociologically sensitive discussion of the broad trajectory of scientific knowledge yet available.”

– **Zaheer Baber, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon**

“The readable accuracy of Piel’s work reflects his original intent that Scientific American should serve and nourish the scientific developments in fields apart from their specialties. This strategy has worked well for the magazine and for this volume, and it brings along a lay readership that effectively includes the world’s collegiate population. Highly recommended for all libraries. All levels.”

– **Choice**

