

Acknowledgments

THIS VOLUME distills the thoughts of a quarter century spent trying to understand the early history of life. I first entertained the idea of writing a book more than a decade ago, but fortunately got sidetracked. Children, research, and university responsibilities kept me from reconsidering such a plunge until the fall of 1998, when the alignment of growing kids, the end of my term as department chair, and a sabbatical leave convinced me that the time was right to attempt what for me was a new style of scholarship. Of course, my children weren't the only ones who had matured in the interim, and so whatever critical fate awaits this volume, I can honestly state that it is far better than it would have been had I completed it at first consideration.

For all the caricatures of scientists as creative loners, science is a richly social endeavor. Our worldviews evolve by reading the works of those who went before, by teaching and learning, through collaboration, conversation, and argument. The ideas and experiences related in the following pages owe much to others, many of them mentioned in one chapter or another. Elso Barghoorn guided my thesis research, providing me with opportunities, support, and a collegiality whose obvious asymmetry he never stressed. My graduate education was shaped as well by Ray Siever, Dick Holland, Steve Golubic, and the late Steve Gould and Bernie Kummel, all of whom seemed to spot in me a potential I would never have seen for myself.

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