

Albert Einstein Speaking by R.J. Gadney

4 stars

Humanising the icon

Most of us have heard of Albert Einstein, the famous theoretical physicist who changed the face of modern physics when he developed the Theory of Relativity expressed in the formula  $E=mc^2$ , dubbed “the world’s most famous equation”. And pretty well most of us are in awe of his amazing intelligence, his intellectuality and his numerous achievements. Normal people like me tend to put people like Einstein up on a pedestal.

“Albert Einstein Speaking” reveals that behind the genius the man himself was only too human. Zionist, committed pacifist, socialist, scientist-philosopher, anti-racist, activist, yachtsman, man of riddles and a musician with a passion for Mozart, he treated his first wife Mileva very badly. His parenting skills left much to be desired and he had an eye for the ladies even unto his deathbed. In other words, he was a fallible human being just like the rest of us!

To a certain extent he was always a square peg in a round hole, but what I found endearing was that in spite of being famous and universally well-known, he always had time for everyone who wanted a bit of him. He loved travel and adored his second wife, Elsa, who predeceased him. One lesser-known fact is that at one time he came under investigation by the FBI who suspected him of communist leanings, but thankfully that file was destroyed. His theory of relativity opened the way, ultimately, to the development of nuclear fission, but all he did was to endorse a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt alerting him to the potential development of such bombs and recommending that the United States begin similar research. This led to the Manhattan Project and Einstein was totally horrified and disgusted with the results. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki he became even more of a pacifist than he was before.

These facts are all well-known and well documented in the reams of literature written about Einstein but this entertaining, well-researched, cradle-to-grave biography of an icon puts over the story in a very readable way. The author uses quite a bit of imaginative licence in the text – in places it reads like a novel - and I could have done without some of the more intimate details. Many of his speeches and sayings are quoted verbatim and, from start to finish, the book is full of photographs. My favourite by far is one of Einstein wobbling on a bicycle with a huge grin on his face!

R.J. Gadney’s book certainly wasn’t what I was expecting and I can recommend it as a very enjoyable read. I give it 4 stars.

Bennie Bookworm.

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.