

presidency in 1912. He did, however, serve as chief counsel to the Interstate Commerce Commission and later practiced law in Washington, DC, until his death in 1923.

Piott gives Folk higher marks than did Geiger, who saw him as out of the Progressive movement's mainstream. The author stresses the strong moral dimension of progressivism, argues for the centrality of civic consciousness, official accountability, and rule of law, and credits Folk for stimulating municipal reform nationally.

Some questions Piott ignores. How does St. Louis reform compare with Toledo, Des Moines, and elsewhere? Was machine politics totally bad? Was direct democracy and bipartisanship wholly salutary, or was something lost with the undermining of parties? On balance, however, Piott deserves appreciation for bringing Folk back into the spotlight and updating our understanding of him.

A Lucky American Childhood, by Paul Engle. Singular Lives: The Iowa Series in North American Autobiography. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996. xxiv, 192 pp. Illustrations. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN E. MILLER, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

This twelfth volume in the University of Iowa Press's Singular Lives series, written when Paul Engle was in his seventies, is dedicated to his daughters and grandchildren. He considered it important for them to understand the curious sort of life he had led, he said, because "it was unique to this country and it will never come again; you will never see it" (xiv). Not a conventional memoir, this well-wrought paean to childhood and adolescence provides a highly selective account of growing up in the small-town Midwest (Cedar Rapids) during the early twentieth century (the author was born in 1908 and died in 1991). Several chapters were originally published in *American Heritage*, *Holiday*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*.

Engle achieved academic success and publishing renown, winning a Rhodes scholarship in 1932, becoming a professor at the University of Iowa, and directing the Iowa Writers' Workshop from 1943 to 1966. He published eleven books of poems and a novel in addition to memoirs, children's stories, and an opera libretto. None of this seemed to have been forecast by his childhood, at least as he recorded it in this appealing autobiographical account. Rather than reminiscences of teachers, schools, and books read, his stories here are about life in the family, eccentric uncles, soda fountains, newspaper hawking, horses, and community rituals.

The most emotionally charged sections describe his mother and father. Eva, who married at sixteen, devoted her entire life to her growing family of four children, and always subordinated herself to her husband's wishes. Tom, a "tough old bastard" (20), tightly controlled his emotions until they exploded in fits of profanity and violence. Like his wife, he worked himself to the bone, eking out a meager living by running a livery stable. Young Paul's love-hate relationship with his father forms the emotional core of the book.

If Engle remains ambivalent about his father, his evocation of the social context surrounding his family is largely nostalgic, even sentimental. Chapters on Memorial Day, the fabulous Fourth of July, the Iowa State Fair, Thanksgiving, and old-fashioned Christmases recapture the mood and feel of a distant time. The drugstore where he dispensed drugs, perfume, and ice cream sodas, he realized later, actually constituted "a window into the whole area" (37). But in a chapter titled "Those Damn Jews" he portrays the dark side of his home town and its potential for bigotry and hate.

A wonderfully descriptive chapter on "The Glory of the Senses" provides clues to the highly developed qualities of observation that helped lead to Engle's later success as a writer. He calls up in memory the sights, sounds, feels, and—most impressively—the smells of the town. Another clue to his future career lay in his eager reading of the magazines on the rack of the drug store where he worked. For insight into the career of one of our most important midwestern writers and into the qualities of small-town life during the early 1900s, *A Lucky American Childhood* is highly recommended.

Imagining Home: Writing from the Midwest, edited by Mark Vinz and Thom Tammaro. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. xii, 212 pp. \$19.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY THOMAS K. DEAN, MOORHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY

Imagining Home is a fine follow-up to Mark Vinz and Thom Tammaro's successful anthology of midwestern literature, *Inheriting the Land*. This collection, taking a narrower approach, assembles exclusively essays focusing on the topic of home, which is increasingly important in an age of transience and disconnection, and how that concept manifests itself in the Midwest. The selection of authors ranges from those raised in the Midwest and still living there, to those who have left and transplants. Contributors include nationally known writers such as Kathleen Norris and Jon Hassler, and more regional figures

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