

interested in the workings of agriculture and the future direction of rural life. To listen in on the conversation anthropologists have started about the rural Midwest, start with Ziegenhorn.

"I Was Content and Not Content": The Story of Linda Lord and the Closing of Penobscot Poultry, by Cedric N. Chatterley and Alicia J. Rouverol, with Stephen A. Cole, with photographs by Cedric N. Chatterley and an essay by Carolyn Chute. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000. xxii, 134 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Richard P. Horwitz is professor of American Studies at the University of Iowa. His most recent books are *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture* (1998) and *The American Studies Anthology* (2001).

This book brings together contributors who are in some obvious ways very different from each other—blue-collar and professional class, male and female, visual- and word-oriented, liberal and apolitical, social scientist and artist, old-timer and newcomer. But they are also remarkably alike in their longing for down-home, small-town ways. They are devoted to their families, sensitive to injustice, and prepared to be assertive when challenged. The challenge in this case is the closing of the Penobscot Poultry Company, the last (and at one time the most celebrated) of Maine's sites for turning chickens into meat and byproducts for far-flung consumers.

Cast as the tragic hero of this collaboration is Linda Lord, a seasoned veteran of the plant. About 1968, as friends and relatives went off to Vietnam, she went straight from high school to the dangerous, mind-numbing, dirty, stinking business of poultry disassembly. She worked her way up to the "blood tunnel," finishing off birds that were merely maimed rather than killed by the power-slasher—a den of horrors, if there ever was one. For the next twenty years she endured, earning just enough to get along and to take care of her aged, dependent parents. By all appearances, she was a diligent, devoted daughter and employee, even when work robbed her of so much. Among the casualties, for example, was sight in one eye, a loss for which Penobscot's insurers supposedly refused but were eventually compelled to compensate her. (We hear only Lord's side of the story.) And then in 1988 the plant closed, laying off all 400-plus employees. Imagine—how hard would it be? For a woman, 39 years of age, with sight in only one eye and experience tailored to an industry that just died in a beloved region buried in job seekers? Fact is, of course, no one should need to read a book on the subject to know the answer: "Very."

In some ways the most remarkable thing about this book is that the other contributors find the story so remarkable. Even people who do not get out very much ought to know that meatpacking is a tough way to earn a living, that unemployment stinks, that small-town America is hurting, that little guys don't stand a chance against big ones, that you cannot count on owners, government, or unions soon to reverse a couple of centuries of combat, and that working families deserve support for coping as best they can. To her credit, Linda Lord (the one contributor absent from the long list of authors) seems also patiently to forbear the gee-whiz response of the artists, activists, and academics who document her experience.

To the authors' credit, though, readers gain some vantage on Lord's recollections. In an elegant foreword, Michael Frisch provides a brief chronology of the collaboration and suggests its great potential rewards for readers. The photographs by Cedrick N. Chatterley are an immensely powerful element of the book. The account of the plant closing by Alicia J. Rouverol provides a much-needed institutional context for events that are otherwise—for better and worse—intimately one-sided. Unfortunately, the sources and sensibility of that story seldom surpass the middlebrow standard of the *Maine Times*. Unfortunately, too, readers may wish for more originality, coherence, and insight in Carolyn Chute's "Faces in the Hands," the raw transcript presentation of Lord's tales, and Rouverol's commentary on the problematics of the process. It would have been helpful if someone had more forthrightly confronted the genuine differences in the contributors' standpoints that hauntingly resemble the very class conflicts that put Penobscot's workers first in perilous employment and then out on the street. The result is a rhapsody with which no one should feel quite content.

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