

successful farmers after World War II. They gained the respect of Anglo landowners who desired them as tenants because their work ethic was so strong. However, none had to struggle harder than the Japanese before World War II, and, of course, none underwent the tragic and humiliating experience of internship. The fact that the Cortez Colony was revived after internment, and the Japanese Americans continued to produce crops, was a tribute to their hardbitten resilience.

One of the secrets of success of all ethnic farmers in the Central Valley in the twentieth century was their use of family labor as far as it was practical. The Japanese came under fire from nativists because they allowed wives and older daughters to toil in the fields. Nativists, fearing competition from the hard-working Japanese, preferred to ignore the fact that the Japanese were model citizens: their children thrived in school; they founded and supported institutions such as churches and sports teams; they paid their bills on time; and they produced bountiful crops.

Ironically, after all the struggles, the Sansei (third-generation Japanese) found their ethnic identity and their rural way of life threatened in the postmodern world of late twentieth-century California. Educational achievement had allowed Japanese Americans to become upwardly mobile and to outmarry. Although some Sansei were attracted to the slower pace of life on the farm, and sometimes gave up more lucrative careers to farm the home place, increasingly the tide of agribusiness and large capital-intensive operations made the small Japanese-American fruit farm redundant.

Matsumoto's book, though concerned with subject matter far removed from Iowa, provides a methodological model for those interested in family, community, and ethnic history. Especially valuable is her use of oral evidence, which, combined with a sophisticated understanding and explication of the latest theories of assimilation, makes *Farming the Home Place* a model for family and community history in the nineties.

Fly in the Buttermilk: The Life Story of Cecil A. Reed, by Cecil A. Reed with Priscilla Donovan. Iowa Series in North American Autobiography. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993. xxi, 184 pp. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY HAL S. CHASE, DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Fly in the Buttermilk is a telling title for this autobiographical account of one of Iowa's most notable twentieth-century African Americans, Cecil A. Reed (1913-). To Albert E. Stone, editor of the Iowa Series

in North American Autobiography, the image of the fly in the buttermilk reveals the superficiality of the narrative and Reed's naïveté about how his environment influenced his actions and vice versa. Stone places some of the responsibility for the superficiality on Reed's collaborator, Priscilla Donovan. Surely she is not Fyodor Dostoyevski, and Cecil Reed is not Ralph Ellison. Yet Stone's suggestion that *Fly in the Buttermilk* lacks depth is itself, ironically, superficial.

As many farm folks could tell you, there was never just one fly in the buttermilk, yet Reed's conception is singular: "I was the only black" (xv). As the reader learns, that was not literally true. Cecil Reed grew up in a stable, law-abiding, hard-working, respectable, two-parent, multiple-sibling family adorned with a lineage linked to Robert E. Lee and the pride and dignity of Native Americans. The discrepancy between statement and fact reveals a world view dominated by the perception of being a "minority."

In this regard, Reed's epigrams about "bracing the system," "Rules of Thumb," and "Lessons Learned" are words of wisdom rather than Pollyannish precepts for those who might be hurled by history into an alien environment at any moment. Rather than reading "like a Dale Carnegie how-to-succeed handbook" (editor Stone's judgment again [xi]), they reflect the Victorian value system designed to propagate and inculcate civility in the increasingly industrialized/urbanized culture in which Reed and his generation were reared. It was a lifestyle in which parents, "black" or "white," told their children, with complete conviction, that "manners will get you everywhere." Cecil Reed's career is evidence that they help. More specifically, it was his verbal manners, and in one of his most profound aphorisms Reed declares, "The wounds from sticks and stones will heal, but the wounds from words will last a lifetime and maybe take your life" (164). Here again he reveals his Victorian lineage as stated in this 1851 limerick,

If wisdom's ways you wisely seek
 Five things observe with care:
 Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
 And how, and when, and where.

Next to manners in the Victorian code of conduct were honesty and hard work, and Reed's record on these is also exemplary. No task was too menial or too difficult, and he prevailed in all of them, from shining shoes to shining floors to serving as Iowa's first African-American Commissioner of Employment Security. Like the fly he chose as a symbol of himself, Reed was constantly busy, especially in his middle years, as small business owner, entertainment entrepreneur, civic activist, church worker, father, and husband. It was his successful management of all of these demands that led to his election

to the Iowa House of Representatives. Thereafter, instead of "doing it," he talked about it. *Fly in the Buttermilk*, as the capstone of his second career, tells us something about retirement.

For some, this something leaves much to be desired, yet here again the reticence is revealing. Victorians yearned for privacy as much as propriety, and the architecture of their homes and the style of their clothes were designed to keep out the intrusive industrial world. Add the oppression and repression of racism to the assault of technology, and Reed's success at staying afloat on the buttermilk stands out as a heroic achievement.

In this context his youngest son's suicide illustrates the negative side of the book's central image; the fly can be overwhelmed and drown. Why the son and not the father is a question Reed has the wisdom not to try to answer. Moreover, when he admits that his son's suicide is the one stumbling block he cannot turn into a stepping stone, he unlocks the prison door of denying one's limits that led Victorians to victory and their children to defeat in far-off places like Vietnam. Yet, as Reed makes clear in his concluding passage, to accept one's limits and to cease to struggle allows the "fly in the buttermilk" to fly, even soar, rather than fall and sink. It is just such truth that could take us beyond racism and that makes *Fly in the Buttermilk* a worthwhile read for Americans and especially Iowans.

Death and Dying in Central Appalachia: Changing Attitudes and Practices, by James K. Crissman. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994. xii, 247 pages. Illustrations, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$13.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY LOREN N. HORTON, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Death and Dying in Central Appalachia fills a void in the study of twentieth-century funeral and burial practices. Death and the rituals connected with it are constant factors in human experience, and activities associated with death are precise social indicators, revealing community attitudes and traditions.

Beginning in the 1970s, James Crissman interviewed almost four hundred people in a five-state area in central Appalachia (Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky). He also surveyed hundreds of books, articles, and other written sources, and used more than one thousand audio recordings made since 1922. In addition, he draws on personal experiences from a lifetime spent in the region. The information he gathered encompasses funeral and burial practices of the entire twentieth century, with reminiscences from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Most of Crissman's

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