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**Review of *My Remembers: A Black Sharecropper's Recollections of the Depression* By Eddie Stimpson Jr.**

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*My Remembers: A Black Sharecropper's Recollections of the Depression.* By Eddie Stimpson Jr. Introduction by James W. Byrd. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996. Illustrations, appendices, index. xxi + 167 pp. \$18.95.

This volume recalls experiences during the 1930s and 1940s on farms in the Plano, Texas, area north of Dallas. Frances Wells, a local Plano historian, helped Eddie Stimpson organize into a book his written memories, intended originally for descendants. In the introduction James W. Byrd, a literary scholar, suggests the influence of African American folk culture on the writing style and on some activities described in the volume, such as yard sweeping. Popular culture phrases also appear occasionally, and the author's phonetic spelling has been retained throughout.

After an opening summary of his life, Stimpson presents short chapters on a range of economic and social topics. He discusses raising animals, hunting, bootlegging, and family roles in farming, along with changes such as the use of tractors and the impact of insecticides on wild fruit and animals. He recounts the strain between opportunities and the fear of failure.

Chapters on aspects of social life are more extensive. When Stimpson turns to family tensions and roles he recounts his washing and ironing, although gender defined other tasks. He also describes houses as well as types of food and canning. Recreation included homemade

games, gambling, dancing, and Juneteenth celebrations. Home remedies and a midwife met most health needs, with a doctor called for emergencies. Children pursued education in a one-room school with used books and time off for planting and harvesting. Religion at home and in church offered freedom from life's pressures, an opportunity for expression, and a memorable female preacher. Stimpson recalled a sense of community among neighboring farm families, which included taking in travelers, in one instance the outlaws Bonnie and Clyde. Problems of race relations are mentioned, along with fair-minded whites.

The spirit of the volume is captured in Stimpson's own words: "I don't want to go back, but I don't want to forget where I come from." *My Remembers* is more like James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, with its focus on daily life, than Theodore Rosengarten's compilation, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nat Shaw*, an Alabama sharecropper, with its stronger narrative flow. Readers and historians with an interest in early twentieth-century sharecropping and African American history, especially in Texas, should find this memoir enjoyable and useful.

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