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## Lucky Man: Memories of a Life in Communications

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Roy Loewen is constructing a record as the most innovative historian in the Mennonite and Amish world. *Diaspora in the Countryside* is so meticulous that it may lead to interrogation of the very assumption of "Great Disjuncture," despite Loewen's reliance on that thesis. In the larger sweep of Mennonite history since the sixteenth century, and of rural history in general since that time, "disjuncture" begins to seem the norm. Persecution, migration, wars, agricultural transformations, complex ambivalences toward technology, cultural fragmentation: these have occurred often, almost constantly, over the past five centuries. Perhaps it is the illusion of stability that must be scrutinized. The constant that Loewen identifies most clearly is "a multifaceted story of cultural creativity" (17), illuminating the delicious irony of intentional change to remain the same, or to maintain the fiction of an unchanging social order. Comparative history across national borders, such as this book, can remove many blinders and open new vistas for scholarly creativity in all histories, not merely the history of a tiny group located in two corners of the North American grasslands.

*Lucky Man: Memories of a Life in Communications*, by William Barlow Quarton III. West Branch: Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association, 2005. xii, 131 pp. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$20.00 cloth.

Reviewer Steve Coon is a communications consultant and emeritus associate professor and former coordinator of electronic media studies in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Iowa State University.

It would be difficult to name anyone who has contributed more to the development and growth of broadcasting in Iowa than William Barlow Quarton III. An Iowa native, Quarton remained firmly rooted in the Hawkeye State despite his larger roles on the national stage. As he writes in his short autobiography, *Lucky Man*, Quarton made his reputation and fortune in Cedar Rapids at WMT radio and television in a career that spanned six decades. At the same time, he rubbed shoulders with many broadcast legends of the second half of the twentieth century. As early as the mid-1940s, Quarton contracted with Walter Cronkite to deliver Washington news to WMT. It was one of numerous decisions that would elevate Quarton to the forefront of broadcast pioneers. For his part, Cronkite, in his foreword to the book, writes, "I was blessed, because Bill Quarton was one of the best bosses I ever had."

Iowa's rich broadcast history boasts such luminaries as B. J. Palmer, the Cowles family, and sports announcer Ronald "Dutch" Reagan. Quarton describes them all as he modestly understates his

own career as entrepreneur, educational leader, and philanthropist. He chaired the CBS Television Affiliates Board, helped create Iowa's Public Broadcast Service, and—although a college dropout—ascended to membership on the Iowa Board of Regents. Although Quarton's descriptions of his many travels late in life seem gratuitous, his entertaining reflections on Iowa broadcast history make *Lucky Man* a satisfying read.

*Iowa City's Irving Weber: A Biography*, by Lolly Parker Eggers. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2006. xii, 402 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.00 paper.

Reviewer Jan Olive Nash is principal of Tallgrass Historians L.C. In that capacity, she has visited and studied the history of Iowa towns for 15 years and has made close studies of several Iowa City properties. She also recently completed a Ph.D. dissertation at Loyola University Chicago on the survival of small towns in Iowa.

Lolly Parker Eggers is clearly Irving Weber's biggest fan, for who else could muster the stamina needed to research the minutiae contained in her biography of Iowa City's beloved official historian? Covering everything from Weber's 1839 genealogical roots in rural Johnson County to his boyhood neighborhood gang, his successful business career, and, finally, his retirement years spent writing local history, Eggers documents Weber's long life (1900–1997) with organizational skill and clear prose. While placing her subject within a strong community history, little broader context emerges to understand Weber within the larger patterns of the twentieth century, although he experienced most of it. Some historical generalizations are overstated, and the book lacks footnotes, but Eggers includes paragraphs of specific chapter sources for those wanting more detail. An extensive bibliography and useful index promise user-friendliness for researchers.

This book is really a nostalgic social history of a small midwestern city, wrapped around the biography of a prolific local historian. As the former, it recalls Lewis Atherton's *Main Street on the Middle Border* (1954) and largely repeats work already in general circulation. It is also a case study of a local historian, in which Irving Weber emerges as one of the last of his type—the well-mannered gentleman historian raised by Victorian parents. Weber epitomizes a segment of civil society and a manner of behaving unfamiliar to many today. Modest and soft-spoken, Weber did an immense service to his hometown. With the help of this biography, he will forever be a fixed part of this community's memory.