



Always of Home: A Southern Illinois Childhood (Shawnee Books)

Mr. Edgar Allen Imhoff M.S.

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Edgar Allen Imhoff renders a series of touching, colorful vignettes about growing up in southern Illinois during the Great Depression. He writes poignantly of his family and their struggles (including his father's exhausting but successful effort at self-education) as he revisits his early childhood years in the country and his eventual move to the town of Murphysboro, where he encountered school bullies, outstanding teachers, first love, World War II, and adolescence.

Imhoff contrasts these memories of his youth with events, incidents, and thoughts from his more recent past. While writing a government check with six figures to the left of the decimal, he remembers how his mother once scrounged together thirty cents so Imhoff and his brother and sister could go to the circus with their classmates. Listening to President Carter give a speech in the Rose Garden reminds him of the contrasting elocutionary style of the Reverend William Boatman, the pastor at his country church, which was built by Imhoff's great-great-grandfather and others.

Through such contrasts, Imhoff not only paints a loving picture of his past, he also comments on the alienation and emptiness that mark many lives in the United States, especially those of modern nomads. Imhoff has himself become a nomad, living far from the land of his birth, enjoying a successful and rewarding career. Yet he is drawn repeatedly to his past, his family, his childhood home, and the intricate combination of events, attitudes, values, and loyalties that influenced and molded him.

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