

## Between Gravity and What Cheer: Iowa Photographs

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ISSN 0003-4827

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### Recommended Citation

Hokanson, Drake. "Between Gravity and What Cheer: Iowa Photographs." *The Annals of Iowa* 77 (2018), 451-452.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12543>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

day Buddhist mourning ritual and traditional Tibetan wedding rites. Although written clearly, the book should have included a timeline to help readers with the sequence of important family events. Gender roles receive cursory attention. Did Migmar's cleaning job carry greater stigma because it was seen as women's work? Did Tenzin, who had been employed longer than her husband, earn more money? If so, did that create tension in the household? Also, immigrants and refugees often live in communities with African Americans as neighbors: What interactions did the family have with blacks?

Uraneck, a childless divorcée, filled a void through her relationship with this refugee family. "Welcoming these wayfarers," she writes, "rekindles our humanity and heals our broken parts." These words echo the sentiment of numerous Iowans during the Vietnam War era. As they supported Governor Robert Ray's resettlement of refugees, many Iowans healed from the wounds of the Vietnam War. Uraneck demonstrates that when we close the door on refugees, it is not only the refugees who lose out.

*Between Gravity and What Cheer: Iowa Photographs*, by Barry Phipps. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2018. iv, 104 pp. 105 color photographs. \$29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Drake Hokanson is an author, photographer, and independent scholar. He has written about and photographed Iowa extensively, including *Reflecting a Prairie Town: A Year in Peterson* (1994) and *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* (1988).

Photographer Barry Phipps is a recent migrant to Iowa from Chicago. In his short years here he has brought us a crisp, colorful look at the wide reaches of the Hawkeye State. Phipps admits that he knew nothing about Iowa's towns and landscape when he arrived. *Between Gravity and What Cheer* is his attempt to discover some essential visual facts about his adopted state.

Over four years he traveled border to border and shot hundreds of rolls of color film (yes, film). Phipps marked up his state map and headed to towns with interesting names (Diagonal, Gravity, What Cheer), eventually photographing in all 99 counties. Phipps draws on his training as a painter and responds to his subjects almost entirely visually — free of history, geography, or a sense of lives lived in a great open state. He was particularly drawn to small-town main streets, where he found old neon signs, red gas pumps, modern blue steel buildings, and a building front painted like the American flag, echoing Robert Frank's *The Americans*. He brings us rural land as well — rivers, fields, wind turbines

—but his eye seems less comfortable here. There are a few Iowa landmarks, including the Stanton coffee pot water tower and the shrine near Buddy Holly's crash site, plus a scattering of casual portraits, seemingly of folks who just happened by to chat with an itinerant camera man.

This is an enjoyable book, seeded with the occasional visual joke, providing a new and slightly askew view of Phipps's now beloved state.