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Recommended Readings

*The Ripest Moments: A Southern Indiana Childhood*

by Norbert Krapf, Indiana Historical Society Press, 2008

Reviewed by Fred Yaniga

Norbert Krapf has justly accumulated accolades since returning to his Indiana home from New York in 2004. Producing 8 books and a Jazz CD in those 5 years, Krapf, Indiana's Poet Laureate, shares some of that rich harvest with his 2008 *The Ripest Moments: A Southern Indiana Childhood*.

Oddly enough, this book is not a collection of poetry most Krapf readers would expect after earlier volumes like *Finding the Grain*, *Bloodroot*, and his newest *Sweet Sister Moon* (2009). No, *The Ripest Moments* is a study of Krapf's German-American heritage, a return to his Dubois Co., Indiana roots.

Krapf is a storyteller who fills his memoir with old photographs flanked by narratives that tell of joyous and painful family moments. As the reader flies through this compact volume it is not the pictures that tell the story, but rather the story which illustrates the pictures. Krapf raises the spirits of long-past relatives like his baseball-loving cousins Brute and Eddie Hoffmann, his Grandpa Benno who owned the sawmill and his Great-Aunt Tillie who, although born in Indiana, spoke only German.

And in these pictures and stories Krapf instills a spirit of place and time in which you might recognize your own family or perhaps a friend or neighbor. This sense of communal memory is the goal. As Krapf says, his work "is a conviction that an awareness of individual and collective origins can enlighten, nourish, guide, and sustain us and those who come after us."

- Fred Yaniga is a Lecturer in German at Butler University.