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Review of *Chasing Rainbows: A Recollection of the Great Plains, 1921-1975* By Gladys Leffler Gist

Deborah Fink

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Chasing Rainbows: A Recollection of the Great Plains, 1921-1975. By Gladys Leffler Gist. Edited by James Marten. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993. Introduction, photographs, epilogue, bibliography, family tree. x + 155 pp. \$24.95.

Chasing Rainbows is the first-person story of Gladys Leffler Gist, a farm woman who was born in Iowa in 1898 and moved to South Dakota five years after her 1921 marriage. Although Gladys and her husband Ray had hard times in their first twenty years of farming and remained tenant farmers almost all their lives, the story is a happy one of a family well integrated into the dominant religious, social and political milieu of rural South Dakota and Iowa. James Marten, whose wife Linda is a granddaughter of the couple, has lovingly but conscientiously edited the work, providing context and explanation that give it form. Information from his interviews with Gist's family members provides balance and perspective that help us better assess Gladys Leffler Gist's point of view.

A good book makes one think, ask questions and lift up ironies, and *Chasing Rainbows* does all of this. Within the story is raw material relating to a myriad of subjects and theories. The development of farm and household

technology; the contrast between the economy and social life of the Cornbelt prairie and the Great Plains; the dynamics of marital and extended family relations; and local reactions of the Great Depression, World War II, and the post-War years are all open for us to contemplate. Students of the politics and economics of government farm programs can ponder the way the Republican Gists, like so many other farmers, used and yet disdained government support and regulation. There is something here for everyone wanting to think about the rural midwest.

The diversity of women's experiences in the Great Plains invites comparison and analysis, as deeply personal and detailed accounts continue to emerge. Although settling slight-

ly earlier in time than the Gists, the stories of Mary and Jules Sandoz, Luna and J. T. Kellie, and Grace and Bert Snyder are just three published examples among those offering intimate woman's eye views of farming in adjacent Nebraska. What makes them each so distinct in tone and detail?

While rich in substance, *Chasing Rainbows* is short enough and absorbing enough to read in one sitting. Accessible to a broad range of readers, it will be fun to discuss in public reading and study groups and instructive to bring into either graduate or undergraduate classes relating to rural midwestern subjects.

DEBORAH FINK
Ames, Iowa