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Augusta Metcalfe

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illustration by Augusta Metcalfe

Augusta Metcalfe

by Elva Howard Deeds

In 1956, I accompanied a writer-friend when she went to Cheyenne for an interview with Augusta Metcalfe, famous sagebrush artist. We drove to her ranch near Durham and there I met a woman who impressed me so much that I have remembered her with great admiration and affection; there seemed to be a natural affinity between us.

During our visit, she introduced her son, Howard, who sat quietly in his comfortable chair while his mother was involved with the interview in another area of the room. He showed me a souvenir artillery shell that he had brought home when he returned from a tour of duty in the Air Corps in World War II. Later, I recalled his name easily, because my maiden name was Howard.

While my friend left the room for a few minutes, Augusta turned to me with a twinkle and warm smile. She "furtively" opened a large trunk and took out some of her stored treasures. She handed me some sheets of stationery and an envelope which she had personalized with some clever sketches and signed with her "brand". Then she quickly closed the trunk lid and got ready to resume the interview. I still have my fond remembrances of our visit. I later learned that Augusta had sketched familiar ranch scenes on letters that she wrote to Howard while he was in Europe. One of the airplanes was dubbed "The Black Cat" in honor of the feline often appearing in her sketches.

When Augusta Corson Metcalfe died on Sunday, May 9, 1971, The Cheyenne Star aptly and warmly announced her passing: **Brush of Pioneer Stilled By Death**. Augusta was pictured riding her horse in a parade at the Old Timers' Reunion in Cheyenne in 1957.

Augusta's services were held in the auditorium at Durham Wednesday afternoon at 2:30, with Leland Burch of Durham, assisted by Raymond Duncan, directing the services. Augusta was buried in Silent Home Cemetery, near Roll.

Some information about the famous artist has been taken from The Star and the Durham newspaper:

DURHAM—Mrs. Augusta Metcalfe, 89, nationally known western Oklahoma artist and member of a pioneer ranch family, moved to Roger Mills County in 1893. Her fame brought national attention, beginning when she won a blue ribbon at the Oklahoma State Fair in 1911. There was a one-woman art show for her at Municipal Auditorium in Oklahoma City in 1949. A year later, she was featured in Life Magazine, which brought her works national attention, with some displayed in New York and cities across the nation. Many of her paintings have become collector's items. "Recognized as one of America's best painters of prairie grasslands, of horses and the men and women who rode them, and of the rugged pioneer way of life, Mrs. Metcalfe was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, November 17, 1968." (Durham newspaper)

A picture of Mrs. Metcalfe, painted by John Metcalf (no relation), hangs in the Black Kettle Museum in Cheyenne. ■

(Elva Howard Deeds, a retired schoolteacher, lives in Sentinel, OK.)