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At Peace

By Margaret Friedrich

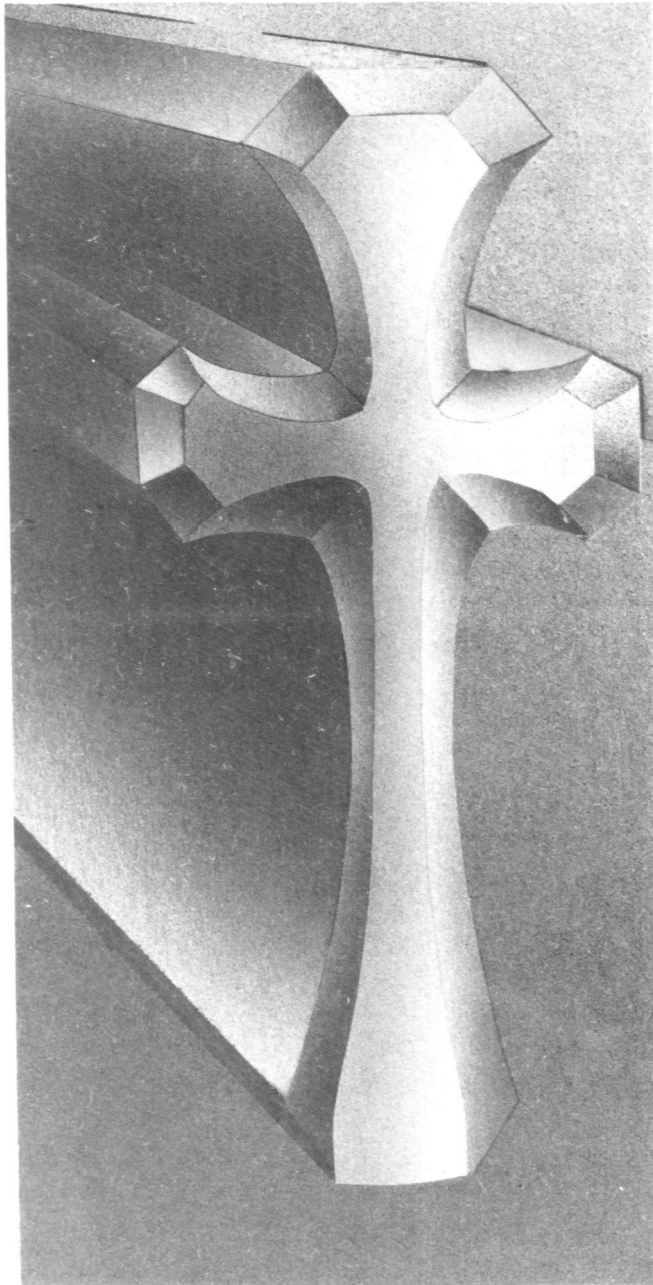


Illustration by Sue McGuire

MARGARET FRIEDRICH from Clinton is a member-at-large of the OWFI. She contributed to WESTVIEW, Volume 1, Number 1, and has continued from time to time to write for her favorite journal.

Peace Cemetery lies beside Highway 183 near Bessie in Western Oklahoma. It shares the name of the church founded by a group of immigrants who left Russia in search of freedom to worship God undisturbed. Those pioneers named their church **Peace**, echoing the desire of their hearts. The cemetery is across the road from the church; it faces the wide western window which depicts in rich colors the Ascension of our Lord. The stained glass suggests a message of love and hope and peace to lighten the burden of those who mourn. Remarkable is the degree of support all share, one with another. No family has ever met sorrow alone. Every member has given love and shared the loneliness. Reflected here are the thoughts of one whose family has been deeply involved in that cemetery since its beginning.

He walked with me and talked with me of love and of the land. We sat on a grassy knoll and spoke of God and His enduring love. We wandered among the gravestones, and he told me of those whose names were cut into the markers. See! Here is the wee white lamb in stone which marks the place of the first to be interred on the wind-swept prairie—a tiny newborn—and beside him his brother, only seven. Ah, the children! Life was cruel to the little ones in those early days.

Twin arches of pure white marble mark the resting places of two sturdy young men, victims of violence in the new wild land.

A black iron cross stands at the head of the pioneer leader, the Joshua who led the pilgrimage. Did he live long enough to savor his dream?

Oh, here lie the remains of the lovely young daughter taken by the terrible epidemic of typhoid fever in 1910. A favorite of all and mourned by everyone, she was only sixteen.

Stop! This is where they laid their mother—a family of teenagers. The mound that covered her was blanketed with lilacs she had grown. Ever afterward, the fragrance of lilacs in the springtime brought an aching loneliness.

Gladly he answered the call to war for his beloved country. He met his Maker on a dark battlefield on the Dark Continent. For his parents, it was the end of bright earthly hopes.

The wise old Pastor rests from his labors here among those he had so often counseled and comforted.

Brave young horseman! Here he lies, somehow killed by the horse he loved, gone at fifteen.

It happened at Christmastime. The collision of two pickups took the lives of three near and caring neighbors. Two of them were elderly; the third was the vibrant young Sunday School superintendent. At that happy season a whole community was left in mourning.

At eighty-plus he came here to rest. Father, dear Father who went without a coat so that his sons and daughters might have shoes to wear to school. In this God-given land the young must be educated, for they will give back to their country the enduring qualities of faith and character.

Not one of the nearly five hundred bodies buried here in Peace Cemetery can hold the soul that dwells in a better land within the care of One who is All Wise.

At last it is my time to say farewell to my Beloved. No longer will he walk nor talk with me. But how precious are the memories. Our hearts and minds were intertwined. Our faith was shared. Our prayers were blended. Still I walk among the gravestones. My heart is at peace. ●