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Nostalgia

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N stalg

By George Levite

Companionship

When

a crew was sent to dismantle the old depot in Apache, I found myself filled with nostalgic memories. The railroad had been the lifeblood of our small community in its growing years, and I suddenly felt the burden of my years as the boards were torn away.

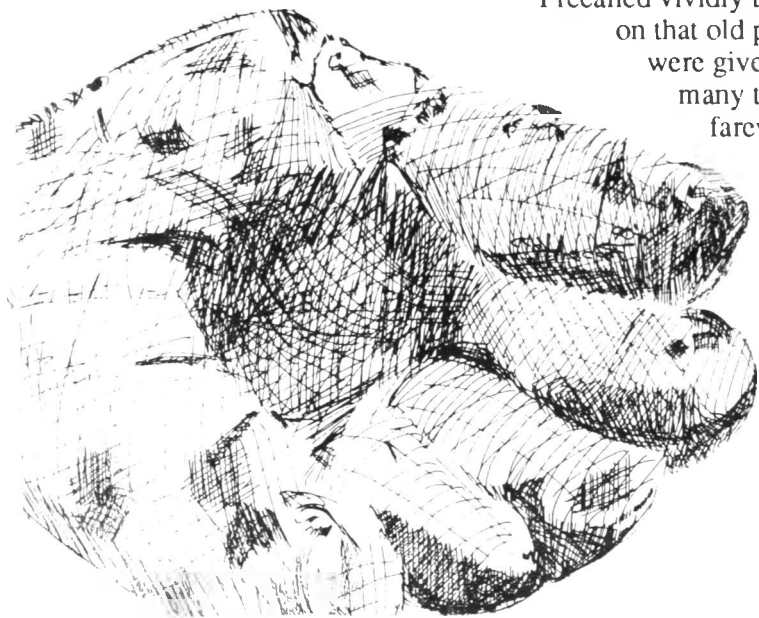
I recalled vividly the many joyful and sad occasions which had taken place on that old platform. Wedding parties and victorious athletic teams were given rousing welcomes from the assembled crowd. And many tears were shed by those who wished their loved ones farewell when they left for military service.

One such departure remains in my mind as clearly as if it happened yesterday. It was the day my friend Jim Amspacher left from that very spot to fight the dreaded Hun in far-off France. I gave him my baseball glove, my most prized possession, hoping he could use it to while away the lonely hours with some other baseball-loving Yank.

"It won't be any time at all," I remember assuring him, "until I'll be coming down to this old station to get my glove back. And to see you, too, of course!" And we laughed as young men do and said goodbye.

But Jim, like so many of America's finest, didn't come home. He died in France in a cause that suspended many a friendship and severed many a family tie. It was a war to end all wars.

Illustration by Robb Kopp



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"He died in France in a cause that suspended many; a friendship and severed family ties."

Because of primitive shipping methods and the large number of our boys who died, it was several years later that Jim's surprised and then stunned family was called to that same old platform to claim a small wooden crate that contained his effects.

Eager to touch what he had touched last, his folks opened the box right there on the platform and sent for me, the friend who had been like a brother they often said in the sad years following their loss.

When I hurried down the hill from the store to see what had happened, I saw them huddled around the open crate. With tears in her eyes, Mrs. Amspacher handed my glove to me. I had come to that old platform to retrieve it after all. For us that day, that spot became hallowed ground.

Such a place should be dismantled with gentle hands.



(GEORGE LEVITE moved to Apache, Oklahoma Territory, in 1903 at the age of ten with his father and mother, who established Levite's Hand Corner Store. Upon his father's death, George assumed ownership of the store, which he



operated until his death in 1975. He was also a sign painter and a freelance writer for newspapers throughout the state. His autobiography, GEORGE! FOR LILY, is in its seventh printing. "Nostalgia" was submitted by his daughter, Molly Levite Griffis, of Norman.)

*Design by Cynde Roof
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Companionship