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## The Last Mile

Connie Higgins Gass

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*(Grandma Higgins is immortalized by yet another of her grandchildren, Connie Higgins Gass of Hammon)*

## The Last Mile

*by Connie Higgins Gass*

My heart and mind wage war against each other  
To determine whether I should cry.  
I know there are people around me,  
But I hear little of what they say  
As thoughts of her consume my day.

I visited her old home place this morning  
For the first time in a long while.  
It seemed lonely and so much smaller  
Than when I was a child.  
The whole south side of that old house  
Used to be covered in trumpet vines.  
She liked to tell me how much cooler  
They made it in the summertime.

Most folks considered her mighty stubborn  
Because she refused to let go of the old ways.  
Well, Call it what you may.  
Her determination provided me with memories —  
Outside my own —  
Of a life where pioneers were at home.  
A home where there were nails in the kitchen wall,  
A home where my dad and his brothers hung their overalls.  
(Seems in those days a boy had only two pairs of pants--  
one for school, one for Sunday meeting, or a Saturday  
night dance.)

Because of her, I know what a harness and reintree are for —  
How to use a crank phone and-oh-so much more.  
Like how to keep cream and eggs cool  
By lowering them halfway down a cistern.  
Why castor oil is good for what ails ya —  
How to milk a cranky cow,  
And how to use a butter churn.

She kept her wood-burning stoves;  
She claimed it wasn't so much the fire  
As it was the sound of crackling wood,  
Or the smell of burning coal--  
That could warm a body all the way to his soul.

She used to tell me about coming to Oklahoma  
When she was just a girl,  
About how her papa died and where they buried  
Him on the trail.  
How folks would work so hard  
Clearing the land, and planting the crops  
Just to have them swept away  
By too much rain or hail.

# POETRY

She told me about box suppers and courting on horseback.  
She had her own code on respectable young ladies and  
How they ought to act.  
I can hear her still--  
Giving a detailed description of her courtship with Will.  
He died some fifty years before,  
But his memory lived with her--  
Because she loved him so.  
She wrote a poem about him  
Not long after he died.  
To read it fills me with love and a special pride.

She sometimes talked to me about God.  
She told me if I wanted Him to hear what I say,  
It was best to get on my knees to pray.  
And as I watched her kneel by her bed,  
I was certain He heard everything she said.

Her favorite hymn was "The Last Mile of the Way."  
She traveled that mile today.  
As I stand on this lonesome red hill--  
Trying to accept God's perfect will--  
The battle rages still.  
My mind tells me not to cry--  
That she was old and ready to die.  
I know she is with Will where she longed to be,  
But my mind can't control the hurting in me,  
So the battle ends with my heart having its way,  
And I cry as we bury Grandma Higgins today.



Grandma Higgins (lower right) and her 3 daughters



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