

Excerpt from "The Art of Caring: A Look at Life through Photography" exhibition catalog essay, written by curator Cynthia Goodman, published by Ruder Finn Press, 2009. This exhibition was a group show that traveled around the US and included images from "Tears of Stone":

were forced to relocate from their land in Georgia to what was designated Indian Territory in the West. This relocation resulted in the deaths of some 4,000 Cherokee. The young men were bicycling the trail as a modern reenactment. They started their journey in Cherokee, North Carolina, and ended it in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Fields' photograph was taken as they stopped in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Whereas the previous photograph commemorates an event of significance to his entire nation, *Hall of Fame Football Player* (1984) recalls an individual accomplishment. In this work, George Levi, an Arapaho who was inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame in 1982, stands holding his 1927 football portrait.

A flag adorns the gravesite of Floyd Charging Crow, which is visited by his parents Jimmy and Eleanor who grieve for the loss of their son Floyd Charging Crow, who died from a heart attack when only in his forties. In this touching photograph *Pine Ridge* (2000) by Ed Kashi, the father lingers wistfully at his son's grave, while his mother has already returned to the car. In his documentation of aged Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Kashi recorded not only individual stories such as this one but also the demise of the traditions remembered only by diminishing numbers of tribal elders.

Different cultures and religions invest visiting and tending to graves with varied meanings. Whatever the distinctions, such rituals are uniformly regarded as paying respect to the departed by acknowledging their ongoing significance in our lives. For Peter Granser, *Cemetery* (2002), is another aspect of his documentation of the lives of Sun City residents. His selection of this particular grave was undoubtedly motivated by the wonderful compositional opportunity provided by the lost one's children who decorated it on one side with an American flag constructed out of flowers and on the other inscribed the word "DAD" in white flowers surrounded by a bed of purple blooms. The tree that was planted to provide shade has also been bedecked with a profusion of bouquets. These decorations attest not only to the children's respect and love for their father but also honor his service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Other photographers have chosen to commit to memory those unknown to them but lost to the atrocities inflicted upon man by man in times of war. Wars have already been the subject of a number of photographs in *Disaster*; however, most of those photos were taken to record relatively recent or ongoing events. The war photos in this section were all taken in an effort to make sure that former events were neither eradicated nor transfigured by the passage of time. Sylvia Plachy, Susan Meiselas, Jonathan Moller, Sylvia de Swaan, Andrea Robbins and Max Becher, and Jane Alden Stevens, calculatedly haunt us by the records they made of the deaths of millions of individuals in numerous locations around the world. Their photographs speak to those who have gone to war, those who have had loved ones who have gone to war and returned safely, those who have lost loved ones at war, and those who pray that war will not affect their family or friends. Their

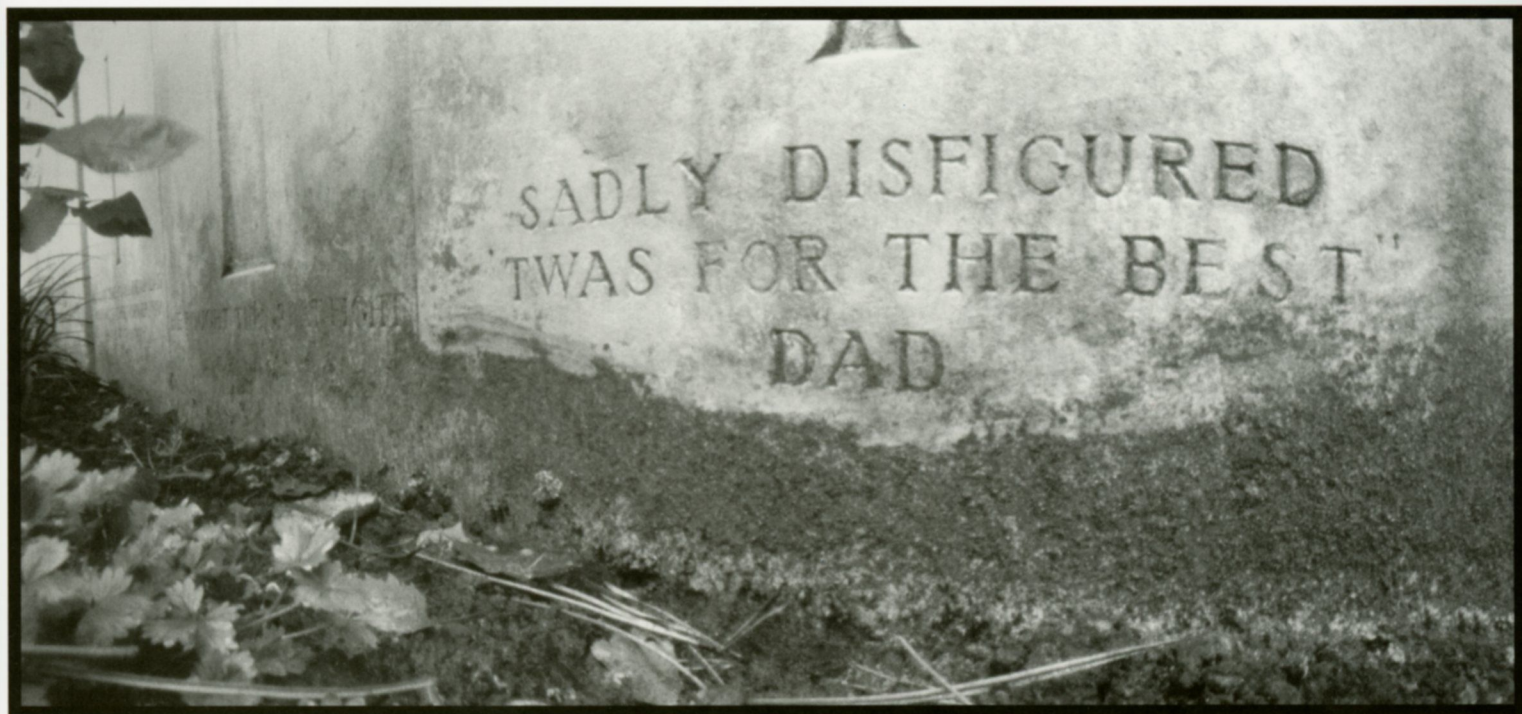
sobering, beautiful and memorable images have a meaning that transcends one barbaric moment in history and memorializes them all.

The enormity of lives lost in World War I is palpable in the black and white photographs that Jane Alden Stevens took of graves, funerary sculptures and other monuments on five trips to Europe over a two-year period of time. On these travels she visited World War I sites in France, Belgium, Germany and England. In preparation, she studied the history of the war in detail and discovered that the number of deaths and the proportion of the male population either killed or injured in each country was staggering. As a consequence, she established certain issues that she wanted to investigate: "One of the things that I wanted to do with this project was to explore the persistence of human memory. Do we actively remember the losses of wars from well before our time? How important do the memorials we build in the aftermath of war remain after the passage of time? And how does the land itself remind us of our violent past?"¹¹⁵

The collective anguish of these soldiers and their families is a pervasive presence whether her subject was a field covered with crosses indicative of multiple deaths in one battle, or the narrative contained in the haunting words on the gravestone, "SADLY DISFIGURED TWAS FOR THE BEST DAD," in the photograph *Epitaph, Brookwood Military Cemetery (British), England* (2001). Stevens shot this picture through a pinhole, focusing only on the inscription on the moss-covered tombstone in a desolate leaf tossed landscape that proffers an appropriate setting for this recollection. The pain and resignation of the family members who wrote these words to commemorate their fallen father is tangible as is their decision to share it with all who would pass his gravesite in years to come.

Stevens tells much more than the story of one fallen soldier. She confronts us with the senselessness of war, the agonizing pain and torment of innumerable young soldiers on battlefields far from home with no one to comfort and console them, where some, although often maimed, are treated and survive, while many others die alone and suffering. She also documented the land on which the battles were fought in photographs of the shell-scarred landscape and meager remnants of once vital villages. Stevens' images infuse the horrors of World War I — fought almost a century ago — with life, and imbed them in the memory of anyone who confronts these powerful, elegiac and indelible photographs.

Sylvia de Swaan chose to remember not only another war but also one that impacted her and her family, Holocaust survivors from Romania, who immigrated to the United States when she was ten. Like Stevens, her quest was initiated by her curiosity about how wars are recorded and memories of past atrocities instilled in succeeding generations. Beginning in the early 1990s, she made numerous trips to Europe to piece together her "elusive personal history against the backdrop of post communist Eastern Europe," always seeking to find the "world of bombed out cities



Jane Alden Stevens

Epitaph, Brookwood Military Cemetery (British), England

2001 Inkjet print 22 x 48 inches ©Jane Alden Stevens Collection of the Artist