YAKIMA - Balzer Leopold Miller, 78, of Yakima, passed away peacefully at home on Friday, October 22, 1999.

Balzer was born on March 19, 1921 to Leopold and Katherina (Heinrich) Miller in the town of Mannheim, near Odessa Russia. He worked on the farm there. During WWII he had to leave his homeland, as his town was evacuated into Poland. Members of Balzer's family were taken back to Russia later as part of the forced repatriation of refugees from Russia done after WWII ended. But Balzer escaped this and after the war he lived in Germany awhile, where he met his future wife, Melita Schall, who was also from a town near Odessa, Russia. In 1949, he immigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada, which Melita had done in 1948. He worked on farms there and in South Dakota. In 1952, he and Melita were married in Regina, Canada and that same year they immigrated to Yakima. They raised four children here. Balzer worked very hard to provide a comfortable life for his family. He worked for Mercy Enterprises as a custodian in their movie theaters and in the Miller Building. He painted many houses inside and out. In 1964, he was employed as a custodian in various schools in the Yakima School District. He worked at H.M. Gilbert Elementary School from 1968 to 1979. He was well liked by staff and students and earned a golden acorn award. He retired from the Yakima School District in 1983.

During his lifetime, he enjoyed fishing, home repair projects, traveling, visiting friends, gardening, reading and spending time with his family. He was able to see his sister Rosa again during a trip to Germany in 1978.

He was a member of St. Paul Cathedral.

Balzer is survived by his wife of 47 years, Melita Miller of Yakima; three daughters, Mary Ann Miller of Yakima, Rose Miller of Cle Elum and Linda and husband Jim Doriss of Beaverton, OR; two grandchildren, Kristi Doriss and Kevin Doriss; a brother, Karl Wilhelm of Friedrichshafen, Germany; and two sisters, Lydia Beker and Rosa Wilhelm, both of Pforzheim, Germany.

He was preceded in death by one son, Michael Joseph Miller; his father Leopold Miller; his mother Katherina Miller; and four brothers, Jacob, Stanslaus, Aloisius and Pius Miller.

Vigil services will be Tuesday, October 26, 1999, 6:30 pm at Langevin-Mussetter Funeral Home. Mass of Christian Burial is Wednesday, October 27, 1999, 10:00 am at St. Paul Cathedral Family Chapel. Burial will follow at Calvary Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Yakima Memorial Hospital Home Health and Hospice, c/o Langevin-Mussetter Funeral Home.