

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association
Oral History Project

Narrator:

HALLIS

Interviewed by:

ALEX BROKAW

KATE THORNHILL

May 15, 2021

(recorded using *Zoom*, a telephone web conferencing tool)

NARRATOR

Hallis was born in Everett, Washington and grew up on a mink ranch, five miles out of Redmond, Washington. Her view of life and the larger world changed dramatically by living and working in Germany for nineteen months, starting at age twenty-two. It was supported a further three years a few years later.

She started her career as a CPA when she was forty and living in Eugene, Oregon. Before then it was catch as catch can in employment and living in several states. She attended Pacific University in Oregon and graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a BA in anthropology and received her MA in anthropology from the University of Nevada at Reno.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Brokaw: This oral history interview is part of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association's [EMCA] oral history project. This interview will be conducted by Alex Brokaw, an EMCA board member with assistance from Kate Thornhill, an EMCA digital archives volunteer and with technical advisor Carolina Hernandez, an EMCA digital archives volunteer. Today's interview is with Hallis on May 15, 2021 taking place on Zoom, a web conferencing tool. The recordings will be made available for research and educational purposes for future EMCA boards, staff, and the general public.

Hallis, do you agree to be recorded for this project? And do you give your permission for EMCA to preserve and make available for _____(??) your recorded and transcribed interviews?

Hallis: Yes, I do.

Brokaw: Thank you. Now I'm going to introduce you.

Brokaw: Hallis was born in Everett, Washington and grew up on a mink ranch, five miles out of Redmond, Washington. Her view of life and the larger world changed dramatically by living and working in Germany for nineteen months, starting at age twenty-two. It was supported a further three years a few years later. She started her career as a CPA when she was forty and living in Eugene. Before then it was catch as catch can in employment and living in several states. She attended Pacific University in Oregon and graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a BA (Bachelor of Arts) in anthropology and received her MA (Master's) in anthropology from the University of Nevada at Reno.

Brokaw: Well, Hallis, I think the first question is your name. Can you tell us why you have one name?

Hallis: Because I was given two names from people that my mother loved, which were so antiquated and so not me that people would say, "Oh you don't look like an X. What's your middle name?" And I'd say, "Y" and they'd say, Oh!" And I always felt like that, and when I got married my husband wouldn't even call me by my name.

And so I searched. We went through all kinds of baby book names, all that stuff. And I was doing—I was test examiner in Germany at a Kaserne working for the U.S. government—and this young person that I had to administer tests to came in, along with lots of other people and her name was Hollis. And I thought Hollis, but when it was with an O. You know, if I just took Hall, which was my last name and put part of my first and second names in there, I would come up with Hallis. And I really liked that name, so I said I'm going to do it. So I just started calling

myself Hallis and making everybody else call me Hallis and then—I mean that was in 1980, yeah ‘80. Ronald Reagan was voted in, that’s why I know it was ‘80.

And then when I came back to the States and decided to become a CPA. When it became clear that you have to have your certificate mounted and framed hanging behind you, so that people can see your credentials, when they come in, I said “I don’t want that other name up there, because that’s not who I am.” And I haven’t gone by that for years because this is like ’87 by this time. So I went into Lane County court and changed it. And I thought, “Well, I could put a” I didn’t want to be a Hallis Hall, a Robin Robinson or whatever. So I just said it would be really easy, I’ll just have one name.

Brokaw: Has it been easy? Has it been easy?

Hallis: It has been so un-easy! The only place that it was really, really easy was going into the Social Security Administration and handing in the court order. And he just filled out the paperwork and said “It’ll be back. Your social security card will be back to you in about two weeks,” so thank you and I walked out, like the easiest thing in the world.

The worst thing has been going into, actually it was the old Eugene Planing Mill and I went in to buy some materials for working on the house and this young man that was dealing with me over the counter—and I don’t know—was I writing a check? I might have been. Anyway, he just looked at me and said, “That’s illegal. You can’t do that. What is your name?” (Brokaw laughs)

Hallis: This gentleman has a problem, he has a real problem, it’s not my problem, but that was the worst thing. I mean that’s happened with it, but most of the time it’s airlines. They have a stumble. I always have to go up to the clerk. I can’t do the auto—rarely can I do the automatic check-in because they—your passport still only has one name. Passport control says “Well what’s your real name? You can’t have a passport with somebody else’s name.” That’s my real name, but most of them say, “Oh, I’ve seen that a few times.” And, you know, car rentals. “Oh yeah, every once in a while we see that.”

Brokaw: Okay, I congratulate you. (laughs). You grew up on a mink ranch, what was that like?

Hallis: Brutal.

Brokaw: Oh, hard work.

Hallis: Well, yes—yeah, I mean any ranch is hard work. It’s just that you know, every year you have to kill a few thousand things.

Brokaw: Oh, yes. You’re right, I’m sorry.

Hallis: Yeah.

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association Hallis Interview

Brokaw: Didn't think about that part of it. I'm sorry.

Hallis: It was—it is interesting to—at this time, because when I grew up everybody wanted a mink coat and I had—even in college—I had beautiful huge fur collars that mother would put on my coats and huge fur sleeves and stuff. And even in high school I made a fur covered—mink covered—pair of dice for my boyfriend to hang on his (laughs) car rearview mirror. I mean there were fun things about it and I even now have a stole that's made—my mother had made—out of the mink from our ranch. I've never worn it. It's in my closet. It's now, let's say, now fifty-some years old and I'll never be able to wear it. One, where would I wear it and two, how would I dare wear it, but it's part of my history.

Brokaw: Times change.

Hallis: Times have changed.

Brokaw: And for the good in that regard, I believe.

Hallis: Yeah. (Brokaw laughs)

Brokaw: You said that you went to Germany a couple of times. How did that—

Hallis: Three times.

Well, my brother got drafted in—what was that? 1960? '65? No, '66. And even though he'd been 4F all his life, it was the Vietnam War. And so he ended up—thank god, got sent to Germany instead of Vietnam—and his wife was pregnant and going to have a baby.

So she couldn't go. So then she was going to go after the baby was born, but she's terrified at that time, terrified of everything. And I've been a stewardess and so I said, "Well, can I come live with you guys in Germany?" And she really wanted it because she wanted the security of somebody on the plane with her. And so that's how I ended up in Germany. My brother said, "Yeah you can come and stay here."

And then ten months later they flew home and I stayed on. I'd gotten two different jobs. I worked at an insurance company that sold car insurance and cars to the American military. And at that time, you couldn't just get a job, you had to prove, or your company had to prove, that you were the only person that could fill that job—that a German national couldn't fulfill it. Now it's really open and all kinds of people work everywhere, but I was really fortunate in that respect that I got that job.

And after they left—we were living in Frankfurt, a gentleman that had three firms in just car insurance in Worms [Germany], asked if I would come and manage the Worms—he had three insurance companies. They were in Mannheim [Germany], Wiesbaden [Germany], Worms—if I would come in and manage the Worms office, so that's what I did for the last nine months that I was living in Germany.

And then I woke up and said, “You know what?” I really, I’d only had two years of college at that time—that was at Pacific University.

And I said, “I really, really, really—I want a college education and I want to be surrounded with people that I could have a really good conversation with.” And my German was non-existent. Well, you know. I call it Gasthaus German. You can go anywhere, you can get hotel rooms, you can get your meals, you can function, you can get your Tank filled by the Tankwart_and_off you go. Also there’s stuff but it wasn’t the same as being in a milieu where you can actually have what I consider intellectual or just decent conversation. So I decided to come back to the States and then I met some people from Penn State [ed note: Pennsylvania State University] who were friends of a friend in Germany and they made that rash, very rash, statement saying, “Oh, if you ever want to come back and go back to school, we’ll put you up.” (Brokaw laughs)

Thornhill: Just to interrupt you, this is Kate. What year did you decide to leave Germany and come back to the States?

Hallis: I went to Germany 1967— in January ’67—and came back in August of ’68, so I think it was October of ’68, where they found me on their doorstep. And so they found a friend that would put an air mattress on the floor and had a sleeping bag. And that’s where I lived for three months until I got my own place and had a job.

And then I started working for—that was at Penn State University—and I started working for the university full-time in their computer center as a—it was a research center—as a computer operator. And they paid for, I would say, about a third of my college education because I was an employee, a full-time employee, but it took me three and a half years to get my last two years of education done. And that’s how I did it and that’s how I chose Penn State. And the reason that I chose anthropology is I started looking through the college catalog because I’d started at Pacific [University] in art and then I went to accounting and I started at the A’s and got to anthropology and said, “Oh, sounds good. I’ll do that.” (Brokaw laughs) That’s how I chose Penn State and that’s how I chose my major.

Brokaw: All right.

Hallis: All of my credits would transfer into anthropology. The reason—

Brokaw: Oh, your art credits. That’s good! I know you were a CPA before retiring.

Hallis: Uh-huh.

Brokaw: What made you choose that?

Hallis: Well, it’s kind of interesting. When I was—so ’67–’68, I was in Germany. And then in ’72 during the Olympics, I went back to Germany and lived with a friend from Penn State who was there programming for the Olympics.

It was the first year they had electronic programming, and he was doing it for fencing, so that you get a little tap and it would go up and there was a whole bunch of us that were sort of like rotating bodies through his apartment, and I liked it, but I didn't like it enough. So anyway, I'm going to go back.

So, in 1978, I married Perry and he was in the military and he wanted to go to Germany and then get out of the military. And I said I could. Already two years in Germany, just like to go to France or Italy, but of course DeGaulle kicked us out of France. Then you had to be in the Air Force if you wanted to get to Italy. So I said, "Okay, we'll go to Frankfurt or near there." And while I was there I said, "There's all these courses that you can take." Ball State University was there. Texas Tech or Texas something. University of Maryland. In fact, I worked for University of Maryland in my first job I got when I was over there. And so, I ended up with all these business courses and I think it was sort of flipping back to that one year of accounting and business that I had at Pacific University.

I gave up there—our instructor was so awful. So anyway, when I came back to the States, I was 38 and I'm looking around and saying, "Okay." I took the interest inventory up at LCC [Lane Community College], to see what you should be, you know, what are your interests and it came that I should either be an administrator or a railroad conductor. (Brokaw laughs)

Hallis: And I said—I mean they picked up on the fact that I liked to travel, and that was nice. But it wasn't going to give me the career I wanted. So I joined this group of people. I don't know. Do you know Carolyn Kranzler?

Brokaw: Yeah.

Hallis: Yeah, well, Perry and I hired her to help us with my house that I had bought here in Eugene.

She was just finishing up her architecture degree and we hired her and another woman to come in and help us think about taking this 1905 farm house that had been broken up into three apartments. And how to make it something we wanted. And she was in this running group and said oh why don't you join us, so I joined them and one of them, well there were two of them, were CPAs. And on the running path about—I don't know—four months after I got back, he was saying, "I know that you've got some computer [knowledge]. Do you think that you could help me bring a tax program into my business." And I said, "Sure." I had no idea, no. (Brokaw laughs)

Hallis: So I said, "Sure" and went in and I did it. And I was good at it. And it was tax season and I was looking around and seeing what they were doing. And I said, "Oh, I think I could do this. I might like it." So I got to the board of accountancy, got the requirements and realized that I just needed a few more requirements and then I could sit for the CPA exam. So that's what I did. And part of that, too, was

there I am, thirty-eight years old, and I have absolutely zero retirement. Zero! And I'm looking around saying, "Oh." And Perry and I were having problems and I thought you need to look after yourself. So, I became a CPA.

Brokaw: And ... you liked it.

Hallis: I did. It was interesting waking up the first morning of my first job and going in and finding out I liked the work. Oh, you do it.

Brokaw: Wonderful.

Hallis: Yeah.

Brokaw: I'm gonna change topic here a little bit. And we're going to start talking about the cemetery [Eugene Masonic Cemetery] and I have a question. You are, through your family—will you tell us about your great-great-grandfather and his noteworthy transaction with the Masons.

Hallis: Yeah, so he, Fielding McMurry, started out in Kentucky. Well, okay, we'll just start with him. He emigrated to Oregon in 1850 and his land grant—he actually bought it, he didn't get it—was two 160-acre parcels for both he and his wife, so 320 acres. And his house that was built was where the EMU [Erb Memorial Union] sits now at the University of Oregon and from there past Mac Court, all the way over to the cemetery, so all the way over to—what is that—27th and Elinor area.

Anyway, so it was 320 acres that he had—he and his wife. And in 1855, the city came to him because he was a Freemason. He was very strongly in the Mason thing and had gone to the Lodge [was a member of the Lodge]. And they came and asked the Masons if they—because at that time you had really church cemeteries or smaller cemeteries and the city was growing and he knew that they needed a bigger area for a cemetery. And this was also the rural cemetery movement, so it was going to be out of town. It was like two miles out of town at that time, and he owned that hill and with that—they approached the Masons. Could the Masons do the cemetery, and then could they buy a cemetery portion and so he sold actually—

In my records, it said eleven acres but now it's ten and a half, and I'm wondering if some accommodation was made because his son James Scott, who was my great-grandfather, had a brick making factory and the reason that the Northeast side is so precipitous is because that's where he got the clay to make the bricks that went into Deady and Villard. So Deady and Villard Hall [first buildings at the University of Oregon] were made with McMurry bricks, and the reason you don't see bricks is because the clay here in Eugene, despite the fact that it's almost impenetrable if you're gardening, is very friable and doesn't hold up well when it's fired, so they had to—after a few years, they realized that the exterior was

crumbling, so then they plastered it over. You did whatever that coating—that they put on it to preserve the bricks.

So anyway.... he got here in 1850 and died in 1860, but in the meantime he was also the first treasurer of Lane County, so I guess I don't go too far from the tree do I?

Brokaw: No, you don't.

Hallis: I really don't. And he and the whole family, my family was really into education, so he did start that first Point of the Hills school that we've got that plaque down there at the bottom of the cemetery, because it was on his land.

Brokaw: So the school was located where the plaque is, do you think?

Hallis: Yeah, well, we don't know exactly where, but it's close.

Brokaw: All right. Do you have a question, Kate? Okay. This is so interesting. Now did your grandfather sell or donate the land?

Hallis: He sold for \$355. I thought it was hilarious, because when I'm reading through—there's this book on the McMurrays in the United States. Oh my god, and the stuff that's in it is just hilarious. Like a cousin said—mother's cousin said, "Oh Scott" (even though his name was James Scott McMurry, my great-grandfather, the son of Fielding) "made the bricks." And she would say, "Oh, he donated the bricks to build these the first two." And, of course, when I talked to Mr. Richards, who was the archivist at University of Oregon, he said, "Oh no, we have the receipts. He sold that to us." You know how the—you know things sort of filter through.

Brokaw: Right.

Hallis: And in that book, it says that the wife—what was her name? Mary? No.—anyway, that she or the McMurrays donated the land for the University of Oregon. I never heard that, I have no idea where they got that. Mr. Richards said not a word of that, so you know things sort of slip in people's memories.

Brokaw: Yes, yes. Well, even at \$355 for the—I believe it was for a certain portion of acreage and then later on he either donated or sold another portion. Is that correct?

Hallis: That's not what I was told. I was told that the whole 11 acres was sold as a parcel. That said, you know, unless you go to the land records and look it up But anyway, yeah, he did. It was his land. It was the end of his 320 land-grant land. So yeah, he was just, he was a farmer. James Scott, my great-grandfather was the brick maker. And Ralph had the orchards in Yakima, out of Yakima. Actually, they had orchards in White Bluff, Washington. And they had to leave that because the Hanford nuclear reservation took over White Bluff and Richmond. No, not Richmond. There were only two towns out there on the Richmond Reach and they had to be relocated.

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association Hallis Interview

Thornhill: Well, Hallis. I have a question related to, well, first thank you for sharing. That's really interesting history. I have a question specifically related to Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association. So in 1995, the cemetery became a 501(c)(3) corporation. Generally, the overall mission was to rescue and preserve the cemetery, so were you part of that formation of the board or were you asked to become a board member to create EMCA?

Hallis: I was there before it was transferred. I would always go up and work on—because I moved back to Eugene in 1970 ... 1982, but I was here in 1977 and '78—and would go up and work on the McMurry plot. At that time, you could just drive up. There were no locked gates and you just drove up, because we're on the top and one day Kay [Holbo – founder of the EMCA board] was there and walked up and said, "Oh, I see you're working on a plot." And so I started talking to her. And then she said that because the city had come to Kay and would she—because Kay had done the Mulkey cemetery and they knew that she knew how to do cemeteries—and said it's in derelict [condition] and the Masons are too old now to do it, and would you start an organization [to save the cemetery]. So she said, "Would you be willing to work with me on this." And I said yes, and so I was there, like for the ceremony at the Masonic lodge when it got turned over—the \$15,000 that they had and the deed to the cemetery—to our organization. But Kay really—I'm assuming she worked with a nonprofit person. That's another name, the one that always goes up to Mongolia every year. But anyway, so I was there before it was an organization and then stayed on for five years.

Brokaw: And then you took some time off.

Hallis: Well yeah because the business ... I went into a partnership in 1995 and—

Brokaw: And so then when did—

Hallis: I could not, there was no way I could dedicate, and I was I was travelling I was most of the time in Northern California or all over Oregon with my business and consulting and audit. And so it was just like I couldn't participate, but up until that time I did a lot of weeding. It was Carol Garringer and I were partners and they would always have a Saturday weeding and planting. And so, Carol taught me—she's a fantastic gardener—she taught me so much about plants and we would spend happy hours, and she at that time couldn't talk. So I could talk and then she would have to stop weeding and write something to tell me. Anyway, Carol Garringer's still here in Eugene, but I have really fond memories of really hands-on work in the cemetery. Besides having to come up with a set of books and set up an accounting system and do all that stuff because I was obviously going to be the treasurer for the first five years.

And that's the time of Doug Blandy and Hugh [Prichard] and Alice Adams [EMCA board members]. And the representative then from the Masons was Alex

McBirney. That's his name. The sporty little cap, and his wonderful little sports car. He was so hot. Even if he was 75 years old or whatever.

Brokaw: (laughs) Oh, Hallis. You're funny. (laughs)

Hallis: He was delightful.

Brokaw: When did you come back on the board for your second time?

Hallis: I'm just trying to think about that because I've been the treasurer since 2017 and I was there as a board member before that, for a year or two, and then—but I was sitting in on the board for a year or so before that, trying to decide whether I was going to come back on the board, but because I'm a friend of Kay's and we were always together I was sort of there and I remember meeting John [Bredesen] and the rest of the board over at Kay's. Shortly after John became president and decided and they set up that endowment. I've been meeting so it's like I never really left but I sort of, I wasn't there in a physical presence.

Brokaw: All right. When you were on the board, were you on other committees or what other capacities have you served on the board?

Hallis: You mean, besides gardening the first time?

Brokaw: Besides gardening. (Hallis laughs) And besides being the treasurer. (Hallis laughs) That takes up all your time.

Hallis: You know, I really, you know, going back to that first five years. I mean yeah there was a lot of just hands-on work, we really—we're talking about being a working board. At our last executive meeting—we all are really working board members. We don't have an executive director. Then it was really hands on and it is. It's sort of amazing the amount of camaraderie that happened at that time around it. And one of the things, even though we had practically no money, is that \$15,000 had to go into the 5-15 thing that we have that was set aside for our perpetual endowment, so we had to do nothing but donations and what I don't know I worry selling grave sites for like \$100. It was nothing much coming in, but we had just enough, and we hired David Lynch, which was wonderful, as part-time.

And it took a load off of some of us that he was there. And the other wonderful thing because we had this eleven—well, ten and a half—acres of chaos and overgrown everything and we were flailing around, a lot of our time was trying to decide how do we deal with this cemetery. What are we going to do with it? A lot of the same questions we have now, but we're now in a very advanced state. Then, it was like, "Oh my god, we've got all these trees and overgrowth and people camping," and so we were going to the university and asking for a lot of help from the graduate students, and one of the ones we got, in landscape was Charmaine Landing. [a master's student at the architecture school at the

University of Oregon; her masters thesis was her Landscape Management plan for the cemetery].

And perhaps you heard about her from others. She came up with a concept for us in terms of on the south side, that it would be the formal cemetery because that is very lawn-like stuff and with a lot of wonderful tombstones. And then, where the mausoleum [Hope Abbey] is, straight up and a little off to the north would be the sort of intermittent where they're intermingling, and then the north side would be just wild. And it was, even though a lot of people had some issues with Charmaine, I thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world because finally we had a concept. We needed a concept and she had a concept and it allowed us to direct our labors in a way that was productive, instead of just assailing things here or there and not having an overall plan.

It was terrific, those two things, with David and Charmaine and one of the— another good thing that was happening at that time was Ken Guzowski from the city's historic preservation. I think he was it. Anyway, he sat in our meetings and advised us tremendously on how to approach things and what we could do and what we could not do, because we already were a historic cemetery and historic building.

And, of course, as soon as we had any money what we had to do was drain the mausoleum, because the water and the mud was flowing through that. So yeah, so we had some really huge issues to tackle right at the very beginning.

Brokaw: The building needed to be saved. At that—

Hallis: Oh gosh, yes, \$40,000 worth of trenching and drainage around that building before we could even go in and shovel out the mud.

Brokaw: My goodness. I didn't realize that.

Hallis: It was awful walking in there, I thought this is beyond anything that you could've just taken a flat bladed shovel and just shoveled the mud. And the water seeping down the walls. It was miserable. So without the drainage— And where were we going to get \$40,000? and I think part of that was a grant to save the building.

Once that got done, then things started drying out, and then we could start attacking the basic issues, but the window project was between the time that I left the board and I came back on so the windows were done in that interim.

Brokaw: You're talking about the golden windows, and I believe there are seventy-two or seventy-three windows. That make the mausoleum so beautiful. [There are seventy-seven replicated windows.]

Brokaw: I want to move on to something that I was there for when it happened. For the 2017 annual EMCA Memorial Day open house weekend, you volunteered to organize an art exhibit that you cleverly titled *Bodies of Work: Art in the*

Cemetery. You not only curated the exhibit, which you mounted in Hope Abbey, but also invited plein air artists to demonstrate plein air painting in the cemetery.

To top it off you created a brochure for a walking tour titled, *The Dying Art of Grave Stone Carving*, that directed visitors to find seventeen grave markers with unique stone carvings. Would you tell us about the process and choosing the grave markers and how you planned the art exhibit?

Hallis: Okay, the easier one is the grave markers. (laughs). That only required research on grave markers and Sally [Dietrich – Sexton and Administrator] provided information and other people provided information and then it was okay. So these are the symbolism, because when you go to the cemetery and you see all these things you say, “Why is there a hand hanging down?” or “Why is there a book open?” or “Why are there these symbols,” so I decided that we really needed it, because we had a couple of walking tours. Probably needed a nice walking tour so that people could see these symbols and have some idea when they visit a cemetery what they mean. What’s their symbolism?

So Perry—this is another Perry and me. Because we’re both artists and I always write Perry into as many projects at the cemetery as I possibly can and he’s usually amenable, so we went up and stomped all over the cemetery looking at grave markers and trying to find the best examples of some of the ones that I would—I had some preconceived ideas when we went up there—which ones we wanted and finding them and then finding the best examples, but then it was sort of scattered all over, and then I said, “No. You can’t have a tour that’s going like this all over,” so we mapped something out so you could start at one spot and then go downhill. And so that people, once they were up at the plaza, [Public Square] then they could start out on the tour and they could just wind their way down. And that’s how we ended up selecting the ones we did so that it was a logical path and that had enough that would fit on the brochure, and so then Perry and I sat and we didn’t want to just take a photo. We wanted something a little different, so we sat around my table with our pencils and pens and drew the part that we thought was the thing we wanted to pick out most and drew those up and then ... and Christine Beneda—we came up with the definitions and stuff so that then Christine could put it into a folder so that was I loved it. It was challenging and it was fun and it was the first time Perry and I’d sat down and done art together for years, and that was kind of fun to be working on a project together.

Brokaw: The brochure is one of the most interesting that I’ve seen.

Hallis: I’m a little disappointed in what happened to it, this last rendition when they updated it. They blurred everything in it and I’m just thinking it looks like the drawings have just been degraded. But I don’t want to say anything to Sally [Dietrich]. It’s like, Uh-oh what happened, why, why did this happen? I have no idea, but it’s what it is.

Hallis: But on Memorial Day, well also you guys know about *Music to Die For*, John Bredesen started that *Music to Die For*. [Music performance series] Yes, really tongue in cheek fun. Kind of “let’s make the cemetery a fun place instead of just an interesting historical place,” so that gave me the idea for—well, it was actually Fran Ross, John’s wife, and Perry and I were down at an art event where they’re doing steam rollers and rolling things over art projects, over plywood and stuff, and Fran and I were talking and I said, “You know it’s just—we should just have this art thing,” and she said, “Yeah, I thought about that too.” So I even thought about “body of work” and she was thinking that she would do her own exhibit, *Body of Work*, up at the cemetery. And I liked it, and I said, “No, let’s do ‘bodies of work’ and get more people in,” and then of course she died. But it just stuck with me that whole idea, another tongue in cheek *Bodies of Work* art show and off we went and that was a lot of work. Oh my god, putting that together was a lot of work.

Once again, Perry went in and measured and drew up every niche and stuff—these little ledges. We only have 4-inch ledges and so the artwork had to be—well, it had to be dry. It couldn’t be having oil on it, because if it got on the marble, then it would stain it. So we had to be very clear. You could only have dry things that—they could be in a frame, but most of these things were like 17 inches by whatever. I even have some place here the dimensions—oh yeah, the left bay twenty-five high by thirty-four wide, or eighteen high by sixteen wide on the right bay—and Perry drew up all these different niches and places and then the artists—then I got hold of—I think, Alex was it you that gave me Victoria Biedron’s name? And I contacted her and then Patti McNutt, and then I added people like John Holdway that I knew that did small items. It can’t be people with big items because these are just small places, so then it was rounding up the artists and getting them to confirm which ones. It was first come, first served on these spaces. They knew the size of the spaces. I gave that to them and they knew all the issues that had to go with it and then we ended up with I don’t know nine or eleven artists.

And then Patti McNutt and a couple of other people decided that they—because I wanted them to be up in the cemetery painting just to be a whole integrated thing in the cemetery and in the mausoleum. So yeah, it took about three months to put that together. And I was exhausted afterwards with that. But it happened people sold the work. I run into Patti McNutt periodically and she’s, “When are we going to do it again?” They loved it. Of course they loved it, because they sold some artwork. That always helps.

Brokaw: I remember it. A lot of people.

Hallis: [A lot of people] came and it was after that that we did the brochure, and so it was just going with that tongue-in-cheek to do “the dying art of gravestone carving” to just go along with *Bodies of Work* and *Music to Die For* just trying to get a

lightness to the cemetery. And I know that there was that one gravestone carver that really pitched a fit because it's not, according to her, dying, because she's doing it. But it's not the same thing. She just didn't get that idea, but anyway.

Brokaw: Okay, other than family connections to the cemetery what are you drawn to most in the cemetery and Hope Abbey?

Hallis: I've loved cemeteries all over the place. No matter where I go, I find the cemeteries and there's just so much history in cemeteries. And they are very peaceful and informational places. It's like the cemetery in Verdun [France]—just to look over these rolling hills of all those same gravestones and I'm sure you get the same thing going to Arlington, but I haven't. It was for me, it was Verdun, the first time I was living in Germany and seeing those masses of young men that were slaughtered in a war for so little. It was also interesting seeing the decorations because on a lot of them they had these huge wreaths that had all these twining roses and leaves all made out of human hair.

Brokaw: Oh, my goodness.

Hallis: Woven human hair. Beautiful roses in full bloom in buds, leaves, and vines all out of human hair. It was, it blew my mind. Or the one in West Virginia, where there is this guy with this huge monument. And that's his name, and then there was this little one with a woman's name and her death date at like nineteen and then the baby's headstone right in front of her, died in childbirth, and then the second wife, same thing happened, and then the third wife with these tiny little gravestones. Or the one in Wellington, New Zealand, where it was up on top of a hillside and I came to it and it had this man's—big thing—man's name and then the woman's name and underneath that it says “she did the best she could.”

Brokaw: Oh dear. And I imagine, you find the same thing in our cemetery, too, maybe?

Hallis: Oh, the one in the mausoleum in that first alcove. Where it is His Name and then it is Mrs. His Name. (Brokaw laughs)

Hallis: He just appeared. Her name disappeared. She was just Mrs. His Name.

Brokaw: (laughs) About how much time do you spend either per week or per month on board business.

Hallis: Okay, so I sat there. It was fun sitting there totaling it up, and it's like a month—like I would say about 40 hours a month, unless it's Memorial Day or unless it's when I'm having to address envelopes for the fundraising letters or if it's not the budget committee, where I'm having to craft the budget and trying to work with people, or on a personnel committee, so just doing treasurer jobs and not committee stuff and not Memorial Day and not the fundraising letter is 40 hours a month, and then we have the extras added on.

Brokaw: That's a lot.

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association Hallis Interview

Hallis: It's a lot. That's why I keep saying, "I retired seven years ago." (Brokaw laughs)

Brokaw: Okay looking to the future, are you hopeful or confident that the cemetery can survive or, better yet, thrive in the next ten years or even a hundred years or more?

Hallis: Oh, if we can get this endowment going, we can do it, but without the endowment and with the dwindling major amounts of money coming in from the regular grave sales it's going to be tough. It's going to be tough. We have found out how much time and effort it takes to maintain ten and a half acres of essentially parkland and preserve at the same time. And it's—

I look out there and I say I can't believe that from what we've done and where we are right now—and we've already got about \$450,000 in endowments—that we can't get to the 2 million that we need. At this point in time, that's what we need. God knows what we'll need twenty years from now, but that we should be able to do and I can't imagine that—that's just it. It takes the will of the people on the board to save it, and right now we've got a board, and we've had a board for a few years now, that really understands that. I think that we do need to build that endowment and that we're getting people that are willing to fund a lot of things that need to be done, so knowing, I just think that there's enough people out there now that are going to build into their wills and their trusts that the cemetery will be part of it.

Brokaw: Yes.

Hallis: It's just that we have to tap into them and let them know that that is what's needed and if they want that beautiful ten acres or ten and half acres to be still there and providing all the fun and enjoyment that they can get out of there. Some people are there every single day like—Kate [Thornhill].

And I just—I'm really hopeful. When we started out, it was amazing. Kay was saying to me the other day, or several months ago actually, that one of the—I think it was Jim Luckey who took over as treasurer after I did—that he thought that there would never be a time when we could make more than \$60,000 a year.

Brokaw: Well, I think he was wrong.

Hallis: I think he was too. (Brokaw laughs)

Hallis: Thank goodness. Thank goodness, yes.

Brokaw: He was wrong. What were any bumps in the road that were challenges and what are some of your best memories of being on the board?

Hallis: Well, of course, the best memories are seeing the substantial improvements, that you understand, that you can see that your hard work has really accomplished something. To go up and walk through the cemetery after—I don't know—being

gone because of my feet for two years, and seeing what all Wendi and the groundskeeper had achieved and clearing it out was just like, “Oh, this is so wonderful.” And the mausoleum, of course, is looking fabulous, and I’ll be so excited when the pilasters are done and if we can just get that leak in the roof fixed so that it’s not running anymore. That is just amazing to me. This is like— Oh, because I knew what it looked like twenty-five years ago.

Brokaw: You’re one of the few that know that memory.

Hallis: Yeah, it’s just amazing. Bumps in the road—there are always—like anytime you get a bunch of people together that are really highly charged and successful people trying to work together, there’s going to be conflicts and interpersonal conflicts of all sorts on boards and employees and stuff. I think these are the bumps in the road but it’s just like any business.

Any business that you’re in, you’re going to have that and it’s just, I think, we’re still together. We’re still going forward; we’re not going backward. So those bumps are coming along, they will all come—that always will be there, and I think we’re doing a pretty good job of hanging in there.

Brokaw: I think so too.

Is there anything else that you would like to talk about or add to this conversation?

Hallis: I just want outta here. (laughs)

Brokaw: Oh. (laughs)

Brokaw: I think we can—

Hallis: You said it was going to be fun and it has been fun. It’s yeah—

Brokaw: Good, I’m glad. (laughs) At least I didn’t tell a lie.

Hallis: (laughs) Yeah.

Brokaw: All right, Hallis. I want to thank you so much for doing this. I know you prepared a lot and I think it’s been delightful.

Hallis: Well, thank you.

Brokaw: Oh, thank you.

Hallis: And it’s been fun meeting you guys. Now that I can actually see everybody, and I’ll have you coordinated when this final project is done and I can tap into it and see what’s going on. Thank you for doing it. I really appreciate it.

Thornhill: Thank you. Thank you so much.

End of interview.