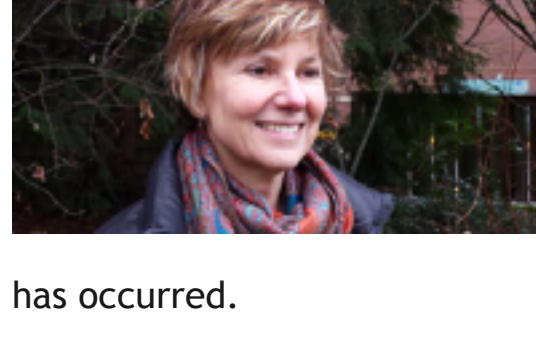


## Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association eNewsletter



## No "Last Sunday" Open house in December

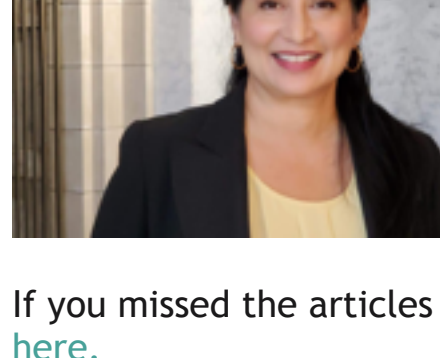
## The Changing of the Guard



At the end of this month we'll bid farewell to Sally Dietrich. For 9 years, Sally has been the public face of the Masonic Cemetery, and as the cemetery's Administrator and Sexton, she handled all kinds of duties and responsibilities, from overseeing burials, assuring the cemetery was adhering to State laws relating to the operation of a cemetery, to greeting and engaging the public when a death is eminent or

has occurred.

While there is the business side of running a cemetery, there is also the deeply human side. Sally notes: "I have had the privilege of working with people during some of the most profound moments of their lives. I have been fortunate to be allowed to do that." And she has done that very well. She will be missed as she moves into her retirement.



As mentioned in a special edition of this eNewsletter last month, Shannon Blas-Blair has been hired to assume these duties. We've been fortunate to have both Sally and Shannon working side-by-side for the past two months, so people should not notice any significant changes in the professionalism with which business is conducted. Shannon officially assumes these responsibilities in January, 2024.

If you missed the articles about these two special people last month, you can read them [here](#).

## A CHRISTMAS TRADITION



For literally decades, the Main Gate at E 25th Ave. and University St has hosted a Christmas Carol sing. People, young and old, gather at the gate area to sing songs in honor of the season. It's a time to let the joy in your voices ring out.

The singing begins at 7:30 PM Christmas Eve, and goes until ??? Actually, until Santa arrives!

This is a family friendly event, and as I mentioned above, has been held for decades so you might want to check it out. Even though the [EMCA Main Gate](#) has "hosted" this event, note that this is NOT a function of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association. Please do not call the cemetery number for information.

## Oregon Cultural Trust



If you've made a charitable contribution to the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association or other eligible Oregon non-profits in the year 2023, you are eligible for Oregon's Cultural Tax Credit. Donors who contribute to Oregon cultural nonprofits, including ours, are eligible to make a matching donation to the Oregon Cultural Trust and receive a 100% tax credit for their Trust donation (up to \$500 for an individual, \$1,000 for a couple filing jointly and \$2,500 for a class-C corporation). Join the movement and help us Make Culture Count! Make your contribution before December 31.

Here's how to do that: [Information](#)

## A HOLIDAY STORY



Pa never had much compassion for the lazy or those who squandered their means and then never had enough for the necessities. But for those who were genuinely in need, his heart was as big as all outdoors. It was from him that I learned the greatest joy in life comes from giving, not from receiving.

It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted so bad that year for Christmas.

We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible. So after supper was over I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read scriptures.

But Pa didn't get the Bible, instead he bundled up and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though, I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.

Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now Pa was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see.

We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew Pa was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my cap, coat, and mittens. Ma gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up the big sled unless we were going to haul a big load.

Pa was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Pa pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed. "I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me." The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high sideboards on.

When we had exchanged the sideboards, Pa went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood--the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally I said something. "Pa," I asked, "what are you doing?"

"You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. The Widow Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what? "Yeah," I said, "why? I rode by just today," Pa said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt." That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him.

We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, Pa called a halt to our loading, then we went to the smoke house and Pa took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand.

"What's in the little sack?" I asked. "Shoes. They're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the wood-pile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Widow Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Pa was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that we would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was Pa buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us. It shouldn't have been our concern.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible, then we took the meat and flour and shoes to her door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Luke Miles and my son, Matt. Could we come in for a bit?" Widow Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped round her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Widow Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp. "We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Pa said and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then Pa handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children--sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last.

I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at Pa like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We brought a load of wood too, Ma'am," Pa said, then he turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring enough in to last for awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up."

I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and, much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes too.

In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks and so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak. My heart swelled within me and a joy filled my soul that I'd never known before. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference.

I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people. I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Pa handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord himself has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of Pa in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Pa had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Ma and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Pa insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. Pa took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want to go. I could see that they missed their pa, and I was glad that I still had mine.

At the door Pa turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two older brothers and two older sisters were all married and had moved away. Widow Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, 'May the Lord bless you,' I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Pa turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your ma and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough. Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your ma and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that. But on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. So, Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Pa had done it. Just then the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. Pa had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Widow Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children.

For the rest of my life, whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside Pa that night. Pa had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life. **Count your blessings everyday, slowly and thoughtfully.**

Author Unknown

## Music To Die For



This popular free music series will return in June, 2024.

## Music on the Square



Music On The Square will also return for 2024.

Information on both of these free concert series will be listed here and on our Facebook page.

John Bredesen, eNewsletter Editor  
Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association

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## Mission Statement

To restore, rehabilitate, maintain, interpret and operate the historic Eugene Masonic Cemetery and Hope Abbey Mausoleum as a cultural and natural resource for the community.

The cemetery is operated for the public benefit, but it is private property.  
(A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization)



Eugene Masonic Cemetery  
ASSOCIATION

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