

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association
Oral History Project

Narrator:

RICH MARIS

Interviewed by:

ALEX BROKAW

KATE THORNHILL

March 20, 2021

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

NARRATOR

Rich Maris joined the EMCA board in 2015 as a liaison between the cemetery and Eugene Masonic Lodge #11. He studied architecture at the University of Oregon, but his studies were interrupted by the Vietnam War where he spent three years as a Photographic Interpreter, PT-2 (E-5) with heavy attack squadrons which were deployed on: CVA Independence in the Caribbean, CVA 60 Saratoga in the Mediterranean, and CVA 61 Ranger in the Tonkin Gulf.

He returned to Eugene and completed his degree and became an architect. He retired in 2014. Rich's love of skiing led him to become a volunteer member of the Willamette Pass Ski Patrol, serving as an instructor to paid staff and as a trainer in rescue and emergency care.

Rich joined the board with a mission to preserve and care for the historic monuments. He was seeking a balance between the board's focus on the landscape to equally focus on the restoration of monuments. He is pleased that the board has adopted that philosophy of balance between the landscape and the historic hardscape of the cemetery.

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 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 technical advisor Carolina Hernandez, an EMCA digital archives volunteer.

Today's interview is with Rich Maris, and that's spelled M-A-R-I-S and it's taking place using Zoom, a web conferencing tool. The recording will be made available for research and educational purposes for future EMCA boards, staff, and the general public.

Rich, do you agree to be recorded for this project, and do you give your permission for EMCA to preserve and make available your recorded and transcribed interviews?

Maris: I do.

Brokaw: Thank you. I'll get right to the questions then.

Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Maris: I was born in Atascadero, California, November 20, 1941 while my father was going through advanced ROTC training at Camp Roberts down there before the war. I grew up in many different places because we transferred quite often. Just shortly after my birth in November Pearl Harbor occurred. My father was sent over to interior China to train the Chinese troops. So, my mother moved with me back to her mother's home town in Salt Lake City, Utah, where I grew up during World War II with my Swedish grandmother there.

Later we were transferred up to Great Falls, Montana, which I consider my real growing up state. I bounced back to Salt Lake [City, Utah] again and then out here to Oregon. So many different locales, environments, affected my whole growth and I was very fortunate in one way that I was the first son of my parents. Seven years later they had another son. But I had what was then, I'd say, primogeniture advantage of being the eldest male son in a family which was quite traditional, and members on both sides of the family for many generations have been members of the Masonic order so I had a very, let's say a conservative or respectable type of environment to develop myself.

That every time we would move from one locale to another one, I had the propensity of more or less dropping the activities I was in in one place and taking them up at another one.

The most formative place for who I am, I think, was in Montana where I was involved in not only scouting and DeMolay, but as a wrangler on a pack ranch, and so I have a lot of the old West in my bones. So, like I said, it changed the influences in different times and different places. My brother never had those opportunities, his development was much more chaotic. So, it'd be hard to really say what influenced me in experiences which was part of your second question I know.

Brokaw: This is so interesting I'd like to go into it more, but we do have to keep on here. What was your career before retiring?

Maris: I was an architect, worked in offices. I didn't have my own office, I was satisfied to work as a team member in larger commercial governmental type projects, not residential. We did both structures and urban planning so I had a broader range of exposure during my apprenticeship and did practice involved with planning and structural design.

Brokaw: And was that all in Eugene [Oregon]?

Maris: No, well, yes it was, although our work ranged as far as Southcentral Alaska where I was involved in programming, designing schools in Athabascan villages to primarily around Oregon, not as much work in Eugene and such. I also had some projects out in Guam but I never went out there

Thornhill: Rich, I have a question, how long were you an architect and also for how long were you an architect working in Eugene?

Maris: How long was I an architect? Well, let's go back. I originally started my studies in 1962 and transferred here. Went into the military for three years in naval aviation, came back, completed four more years of training, graduated finally in 1970, served my apprenticeships and '73 got licensed in Oregon and I did take a license in Alaska, but we stayed here in Eugene, Oregon for the base of our practice. It was called Amundsen Associates, John Amundsen was the principal. I was a shareholder in that organization.

Brokaw: Are they still in business here?

Maris: No, we closed that, John [Amundson] retired at the end of the 90's we closed the firm totally and about '93 I began consulting to other offices..

Brokaw: Very interesting, let's move on. And this is probably a pretty big question, or maybe not; what is the purpose of Freemasonry?

Maris: The short phrase is "to take good men and making better." There are many more complex illusions or descriptions of it. Yes, Freemasonry as such is a male fraternal organization that is very selective in its membership. It came out of the old craft guilds in the Middle Ages where they would be very selective in apprentices who were taken on for training. That is, it's not a religion, it's a, call it a handmaiden [of religion], for any person's faith. We don't delve into those matters, except they have to have a belief in a deity, a supreme being, immortality of the soul, and very clean background. And it only takes one person in a Lodge to allow a petition coming forward, it's a petition, it doesn't mean they're going to be allowed to go through the degrees of Freemasonry, but it says take your faith in what you do and we use the working tools of stonemasons to have moral and the allegorical symbols of leading a good, moral, direct life with integrity. We do not take a position once you're a Freemason, "you're wrong, I'm right." It's as you see things and you're being led by your faith. We say that's the way to follow,

but if you deviate we may say, “something’s changed here, why is that? Go back and check your plumb line, make sure you’re following the path that you want to take to where you are going.”

Thornhill: Rich, I have a question for you. When did you become a Mason? For how long have you been a Mason?

Maris: Okay, I’m going to background that a little bit because as I mentioned, my entire life of growing up was within Masonic families, male and female, so I always knew that I had to ask to become a Mason. And I went through DeMolay which is the boy’s organization, fourteen to eighteen. It wasn’t until my mother in Eastern Star, which is a woman’s organization primarily, that has male counterparts, that I realized [I wanted to become a Mason], when she was installed [as Worthy Matron] in 1985 in Salt Lake City, Utah. A very close friend of our family, a past Grand Master in Utah said, “You know what to do, I’ll give you a letter, go back home to Eugene to pick a lodge to petition.”

So, it had to have been 1985 when I actually petitioned in order to go through three degrees in one year to become a Freemason.

Brokaw: Have you ever been the Master of the Lodge?

Maris: I was a Master, I went through the chairs, offices, in McKenzie River Lodge, No. 195, in the ‘90s and I was Worshipful Master. I was doing parts in degrees, lectures you call them, or ceremonial parts with Eugene Lodge No. 11 off and on. They needed a secretary about eight years ago and they gave me a call and asked, because I was retired, “are you interested in being secretary over here?” I said, “yes,” so I went over (where I am now). I am now a dual member with Eugene Lodge 11 and was made an Honorary Past Master of that lodge, although I never went through the chairs there. I’m only a secretary with Eugene Lodge 11, but I have dual membership.

And, there are also what are called York Rite bodies which are the Christian directed part of Freemasonry. Once you’re a Mason that’s as high as you can get, a Freemason Master Mason, but there are side orders which have more, let’s call it degrees, or lessons. They’re not any higher vertically, but horizontally. If one goes to Scottish Rite it’s in general more philosophical. York Rite trends in a more Christian direction. And then there are branches, by invitation only bodies, and they ask if you’re interested in accepting a petition to join their group and I’m a member of some of those, by invitation as well as by my own petitioning to the Scottish Rite and the basic York Rite bodies.

So, it gets to be a hobby and you can get spread out very quickly and create what are called Masonic widows. A man can leave his family alone because he’s going to all these Masonic meetings. You have to be very careful in setting priorities, for your children only grow up once, and I have the propensity to dive into things very deeply too quick.

Brokaw: My mother was a Masonic widow for a period of time in her life.

Again, we're going to switch gears just a little bit and go back in Eugene's history to about 1858. The fathers of Eugene, and I say "fathers" because at that time I think the men pretty much ran the city, the fathers of Eugene (at that time it was called Eugene City) asked the Masons to provide the city with a cemetery. Can you tell us about this period of history regarding the Masons and the City?

Maris: Well, that's what I was alluding to in the minutes and I went back to April 1859 where more or less the founders of the Lodge were the movers and shakers of the city of Eugene. At that time, they looked for a location, but didn't quite know where to put a cemetery. There had been what they called a bury ground, B-U-R-Y, not a cemetery burying ground but a "bury" ground. There was an open knoll, southeast of Eugene, no trees on it, just grass where I think there were a few burials. So, the Lodge hunted around in the minutes, and they finally decided okay, out there, there is some acreage, it's available. And they didn't buy it all at once. It went through several acquisitions and planning when they decided this is where the cemetery will be located and then the minutes go through all of the development of that property, how it was laid out, deeded and so on. I'm not going to go into it here and take too long.

Maris: It's interesting because there were a lot of comings and goings and how they got out there was on a muddy road and across a bridge, and across some people's property. It was rather back and forth to work it out, but they did slowly develop it across the years and fenced it in.

It wasn't until much later in 1912 when the approach was the mausoleum concept, so once again it is related to the nature of the Lodge, since it was founded by the businessmen of the city of Eugene, not just Eugene Skinner, but others too. They were always interested in business and finance and flow of money, and so the Portland Cemetery or Mausoleum Company had an, I'll say, financial carrot to dangle out there. "If you are willing to build one of our mausoleums we can get some cash going your way."

Originally the Lodge did not identify where the mausoleum was going to be placed, so the committee did look at sites both outside of the cemetery and inside and finally concluded that they would [build it in the cemetery] separate out streets and alleys and lots where the mausoleum would then be located and create a document so establishing a transfer for those lots and plots for the mausoleum. But, once again it was financially driven, not in Masonic terms.

Brokaw: I don't know if I misunderstood this or not, but they didn't set out the streets and alleys until the mausoleum was planned?

Maris: No, no you're right. When the cemetery was first laid out in the first six acres and when expanded to ten acres, the streets and alleys were all laid out. That was part of the description of, let's call it the cemetery grounds, is the phrase I'll use. So when the mausoleum came along, they had to re-deed or re-allocate not only the plots, but the streets and alleys as well, for the mausoleum footprint.

Brokaw: Can you tell us a little more about the mausoleum? Who designed it and why was there money needed?

Maris: Well, the Lodge was always looking for cash for philanthropic or operational reasons. So, they were always interested in, “here’s another source of revenue,” that’s my paraphrasing of it. And if it’s accurate, my paraphrasing of it, there was a member of the Lodge who brought forth a letter of proposal from the Portland Mausoleum Company. It would have been considered by the Lodge, “okay let’s look into this further.” In terms of the design, I don’t see that the Lodge was involved in the design. They looked at what the company was offering.

As I understand there are ten of these [mausoleums] located in various areas, Eugene just happens to have been one. So, the Lodge did say, okay, you can put it on this portion of the cemetery.

I think it was Ellis [Ellis F. Lawrence] who designed it in that Egyptian style, but I don’t know that they’re all in that style or not. It’s what the company brought forward to the Lodge and the Lodge accepted the design. I know of this by reading the Masonic meeting minutes back in June of 1912.

Brokaw: You mentioned the name Ellis, can you tell me who he was?

Maris: An architect and designer out of, I believe, a Portland [Oregon] architectural firm. But I’d have to go back and we’d have to do more actual document research to get more information. In another oral interview you had with Denny Hellesvig—he also was an architect, not a Mason—but he has a lot of that information as well as Don Micken [deceased], who was a [EMCA] board member and an architect as well, not just an architect, but also a Lodge member. When I knew he was ill and passing away that’s when I became active in the Lodge [relationship with the cemetery]. There’s been a transference of architect’s awareness of many things related to the cemetery from Don Micken and Denny Hellesvig who I knew back when I was an apprentice architect—across the decades—we had that kind of a relationship.

Brokaw: In your research did you find anything about the grand opening of the mausoleum?

Maris: I know nothing about that at all. I know there’s probably information in the minutes that are after the dates I was reading from, but my eyes were tired, my brain was worn out, so I just quit scanning through the minutes and the thumb drive.

Thornhill: Just to clarify, the minutes that you’re talking about, are they the Lodge’s minutes? Are they available at the Lodge?

Maris: Yes, they are the ones related to the mausoleum, the earliest I have is June 1912 and I read up until June 17, 1914 about the transfer of land to a railroad company. We lost some of the cemetery up in the northeast corner to a railroad company to run their tracks across it. That’s the latest that I went through the minutes, 1912–

1914 and that's related to the railroad company, not the mausoleum. I'd have to go back and try and find out more information, specifically about the mausoleum.

Brokaw: That's interesting, that would be worth a little more research.

Maris: I think it was called the Portland, Eugene & Eastern Railroad Company that acquired that little parcel up there, cut the corner off.

Brokaw: So that must have been for streetcars then?

Maris: That was for the street cars. The northeast corner was where they originally took clay out of the ground to bake the bricks to build Deady Hall. So that said, the cemetery drops off very fastly up there in that corner and that's because there's an old clay pit.

Thornhill: And just for clarity, Deady Hall is at the University of Oregon?

Maris: That's correct.

Brokaw: There were times in the last 150, or so, years when both the cemetery and Hope Abbey were neglected, and vandals seemed to have a free run. Looking back there were two world wars, the great recession and other adversities that probably made it fiscally challenging to take care of and operate a ten-acre cemetery. Can you fill us in on those times? And, did the cemetery come back at times and then was it neglected again, what happened?

Maris: Oh, I think you're right about the cycling of care and neglect. Actually, the function of the Masonic Lodge is not running a cemetery, its core purpose is Masonic functions, so the cemetery was always a side issue where they'd form committees for maintenance and care and put up a fence or do various things out there. But within the membership of a lodge, as the cemetery association board knows very well, it takes a regular staff that is paid to do maintenance out there. The Lodge would have to take whatever volunteer work parties that they could to do whatever work they were going to do. Since it originally was a barren site, just grass, the trees and brush and everything grew up as people were taking out burial sites and planting trees as memorials [indistinct] while the forest we have in there now was planted and grew in and took away with itself.

The Lodge was using whatever means it had to try and control it, but, as we know, in the 60's, no, after that, it would have been the 80's, there were people who were more environmentally conscious of herbicides and of whacking things out—they thought, oh, this is indigenous. Well, in fact, there were no indigenous plants and trees, it was just grass, but the Lodge would use what I'll call "bushwhacking" throughout there trying to clear things out.

The neighbors put up a big uproar about it. And pretty soon things came along and said you can't do this, you can't do that, so the Lodge members who were trying their best turned up their hands and said, okay its yours, you do with it. That had happened several times before, when they tried to turn it over to the city of Eugene. The city might have tried to care for the cemetery for a year or two, and then they gave it back to the Lodge saying we can't do it either. So, there was

a cycle on both sides of the fence between the community and the Lodge of care and neglect, but basically it was you can't care for it in that manner. The Lodge finally said we've got to get out of this and they did.

The association [Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association] was formed, then the deed was turned over in '95 [1995] of the entire cemetery grounds to the association and they began development of an organized way of funding, staffing and maintenance and the cemetery came forward and this kind of leads into another later question.

In terms of my involvement there, I went up on some early work parties and we did what we could to clear things out. Later on, when I came on to the board, I was aware that the landscape committee had a very strong dominant role and you could not cut things out. They have to grow. So the markers and monuments were being overgrown, toppled over and neglected. And as a Mason I said no, I know there are members up there, they're buried there and I identified 142 of them and where they're located with various records [I had] and I began to explore and take photographs of those, saying these need to be taken care of. I joined the board looking for a balance between care of the cemetery and preservation and care of the monuments, seeking a balance. That was my whole mission coming in. And I think we succeeded in that kind of a transition, in what we have today.

I was involved in some of those early work parties, and we did what we could but they said "no, you can't go do it that way," so it just overgrew and you're right about it being neglected. University students would break in [Hope Abbey mausoleum] and they actually stole some of the marble from inside the mausoleum at the suggestion of a professor at the University of Oregon in sculpture, go get a piece of marble [he said] and do some carving. We know we lost some things that way, as well as they [students] were going in there and having fraternal, I'll call them Goth parties, and we couldn't keep them out, we couldn't take care of it [Hope Abbey].

Thornhill: What time period was this?

Maris: Going on '60s through '80s [1960's/1980's]. Denny [Hellesvig] might have more information on that. But I know they do point out in the lobby of the mausoleum up in the northeast corner, where the marble up there is grooved, worn into it by the kids lowering themselves down with a rope. Rope marks just kind of slots through the marble edge.

Brokaw: I point that out to visitors, where people would be lowered down because you can easily see where those rope grooves are in the marble. That...never mind, this is not my interview, I'm sorry! Okay, in 19—excuse me I'm losing my place here. You kind of answered this already, but maybe you can go into it a little bit more. When and why did you join the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association board?

Maris: Oh yeah, I did allude to that because it was during a transfer of positions on the board with Don Micken whose health was declining rather rapidly and so I had a timeframe in which to get as much information in coordination with Don as I

could, and at the same time do my research on where our members were buried across the decades up there in the cemetery. That's what I brought to the board to begin with was my map and my three-part three format identification of our members, both alphabetically and date of death and burial with lot/plot locations, saying there are our members up there. This may be of interest to you, I gave the map and the three-hole binder to the board and I said that here's my gift to you and I'd be interested in trying to carry this forward if you're interested with it, and I was offered an invitation to join the board after I think Don had passed away.

Thornhill: And what year was that?

Maris: You'd have to ask Elizabeth. I honestly don't remember. I think it was... if you pull the [EMCA] board directory, my year of joining is shown on that.

Brokaw: I don't have it here, but it was probably around 2015. I think you came on a year or two after me.

Maris: I'm not sure. [Note: it was 2014]

Brokaw: You have retired from the board, but while you were a member, what projects did you manage and participate in?

Maris: Well as I said, I won't say manager, but I participated in what was a definite drive to get a balance between landscape and monuments and to get more care given to the monuments themselves. I know that as I worked with Bob [Brokaw], your husband, on trying to get some of those exposed [through cleaning] let's say that was a major thing.

With Denny [Hellesvig] I more or less did a transference of the archival materials for some period of time [from Hellesvig to Maris, the new archivist]. I was not really well involved in doing that and didn't get things put into the archives as regularly as they should have been. So, I ended up turning that over, saying I'm not doing the job, somebody else should do it, and so I turned that over.

My interest I guess was as a lodge member and just background as an architect. Sometimes the board would want to do things and I'd have more of a legal interest without being an attorney, but contractual awareness of certain things that should be considered very carefully before a decision was made. As Caroline Forell [president] will attest, quite often I'd speak up on an issue, so yeah, that's something we should look at or whatever.

So, I had more of an administrative contractual interest in decision making on the board, and I'd bring it up from the perspective of what the Lodge may have been doing in a similar way. Some of that had to do with using the mausoleum for the Sunday concerts, what liability we have for access and injury and things like that. Or renting it out, particularly if you're going to rent it, there should have been a very good rental use document, what's allowed, what isn't allowed, as well as oversight while that's being done.

So, I had more of a, I don't know what you call it, a historical interest in preserving the monuments as a whole, not just Masonic, but all of them and

getting the landscape, I'll just honestly say, reigned back and the monuments brought up. That was my focus, as well as keeping the Lodge involved.

Now the other thing was that Master Donavon Davidge [Masonic Lodge #11] and I were talking about support of the Lodge and Kay [Holbo, but actually Crystal Persi] came to us looking for donations, and so we came up with a program of matching grants, I'll call it. We called it donations, where if the cemetery association could come up each year with a certain number of dollars, we would match it. If they didn't, we put in a minimum of \$10,000, if they got it [the match] we'd give \$20,000. We capped the match from a four-year program which carried throughout this last year when there was no cash flow coming in. But we had said we're going to do it, so we did it. That program is no longer going forward until we take a look at financial turnarounds in the whole economy, and with our revenues which primarily come from football game parking which didn't exist at all this past year. [Autzen Stadium was closed to football spectators in the fall of 2020 due to COVID19.]

Thornhill: I have a question because you mentioned a number of people's names. You mentioned Caroline Forell and she is the current president of the board today. You also mentioned a woman named Kay, that's Kay Holbo, is that correct? And then you mentioned, I'm actually curious, what was the time period for the matching funds that was set up?

Maris: We just ended that this last year, so go back four years now, that would have been the start of the first \$20,000 grant we gave [four years each of \$20,000 grants - 2016–2020]. And before that, in the previous year [2015], I think, we had \$10,000 that we donated at the request of Kay [Holbo], and we asked her to define specifically what you [EMCA] wanted that donation for, so it was separated out. Primarily it was for maintenance and restoration, it was not for administrative purposes, just, say, pay for salaries..

Brokaw: That's correct, yes.

Maris: We wanted any donations being made to be for capital improvement or something that had lasting value, not for administrative activities, say, pay for salaries.

Brokaw: And we did receive \$20,000 for four years, each year, and that's helped immensely in taking care of a lot of these projects, immensely, it was wonderful.

Maris: As I said I think there was the original \$10,000 that went in, as well as the \$80,000 which was on that four-year matching program.

Brokaw: So generous, the Lodge is so generous.

Maris: Because the Lodge is so focused on financial matters and affairs and they had the huge revenue coming in from the football parking (I think those people are just insane, out of their minds, how much money they pay to park, as well as for the season tickets), we had the ability to spread the money out and not keep it inside because money in a bank doesn't do any good, you got to put it to use and so the cemetery is one thing. I think of the sixteen scholarships that we give out every

year for \$2,000, you know it's a way of making community donations which is really a function of, the major purpose of Freemasonry is charity, just not necessarily fiscal but is in action as well.

Brokaw: Rich, you keep mentioning a parking lot. Can you tell us what that's about?

Maris: Well, if people have driven by the Masonic Lodge on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, it's across from the baseball field [UO's PK Park Baseball Stadium], they'll notice there's a big grassy area east of the Lodge where we began parking automobiles for baseball and football games. We developed a program for football parking where we can sell spaces for automobiles and RV's and get about 700 of them in there. And so that's provided a huge revenue stream, as well as parking on a smaller scale, for baseball games [Eugene Emeralds, minor league team playing in the summer months] which may be ending if the team loses this location, that I see happening, it's on the radar.

Brokaw: Right but that...

Maris: Parking is the large grassy area just not the asphalt paved area in front of the Lodge. We try and keep a lot that's for disabled use only, mobility. But people still park some vehicles on there.

Brokaw: They must pay a lot of money for that parking.

Maris: I will only say, a lot of money. It changes depending upon the space they have and the size of the vehicle and the RV's and so on. And if they buy a season pass for that space, or not, it ends up being six, six digits in figures in revenue to the Lodge.

Brokaw: That's wonderful. This question isn't on the list, but you were involved with setting a monument up in the cemetery for the Masons, are you free to talk about that?

Maris: Oh yeah, that's no problem at all. That was part of the fact that although we recognized that we had made a lot of donations, there was actually no monument in the cemetery about the Lodge itself. And we previously provided funds for building the scatter garden's stele [now named the Memorial Garden], and that was up there in the northeast corner, but that just has a little plaque on it.

We wanted something that had more Masonic and cemetery-related significance and symbolism in there and, as you recall, we went back and forth before that could be located in the cemetery grounds and finally ended up in the public square after fighting over a lot of different sites. And I did the design of a broken column monument which actually is not necessarily Masonic, but it's a very common monument in cemeteries all around the United States and in public squares. We do have some Masonic symbolism embedded in there.

I located a master stone carver in California to carve the granite from my design and it turned out that he was a Freemason as well as a Stonemason. We call an Operative Mason a Stonemason Operative Mason, and those of us who are spiritually Masons we call Speculative Masons, so he is both an Operative Mason

and a Speculative Mason, which is very rare in the world, but he is recognized for his stone carving abilities around the world. He carved it down in California and brought it up in two sections. We rented a lift and installed it up there in the public square in the crossing of a street and an alley, so it did not take up a lot or a plot. It's sitting by itself, kind of over by the side.

The biggest contention in that whole thing you know, and I use the word very respectfully, was the wording to be used on the plaque, that it be inclusive and not offensive to people, and that, I will honestly say, took several months. And I was ready to throw up my hands on the whole thing and walk away from it several times. But the master said, "come on Rich, let's work this thing through," so we finally got the wording approved between the board, ourselves [Masonic Lodge], and myself. I guess I was kind of crafting the language from our side that went on to the plaque that's on that monument up there.

The idea was that lodge members could go up and just sit and reflect. I know that they wanted to put a bench up there, too, but that's going to be all part of a master development plan of the public square and the cemetery overall so people could just go and sit and reflect. Not only upon what's there, but the admonition on that little plaque.

Brokaw: I wanted to ask you and you've seen this question so you might have had time to think about it and I think you've already answered it just a moment ago, but what were some of the bumps in the road, as I like to call them, that were challenges while you were on the board? And what are some of your best memories of serving on the board?

Maris: I think one of the early challenges was working with the landscape committee, who were so driven in their direction, and trying to understand what they were doing and why, and suggest that maybe a change of course or moderation was applicable. And I don't remember if it was just kind of that some of those members had dropped out of the board, out of their activity, but that settled in the background. And so that was an early challenge which becomes an opportunity for me to get the balance between landscape and the monuments. The other challenge, of course, I just mentioned, was working out the wording on that plaque on the broken column monument up there so it would be acceptable both ways. The reward was seeing the monuments being uncovered, restored and respected and brought forth for public tours. As we were able to do them up there, that was really the rewarding part of it. And I enjoyed the research, finding where our members would have been placed, and getting photographs, as I could move away the weeds and the grass—respectfully, I will say, to take photographs of those, so I've got a collection of photographs with those monuments and markers.

But the rewarding part was seeing that Don Peting [board member], who I knew when I was going to architectural school—then he was a structural professor—now is involved in history, he's carrying forward that restoration activity. I did several of those with Bob [Brokaw], but I did that less and less.

Brokaw: All right, and that name was Don Peting that you mentioned?

Maris: You know, Don on the board?

Brokaw: Yes.

Maris: Yeah, he taught structures when I was going to school after I'd been in the service. Never had a class from him, but I knew him, so he and I knew each other.

Brokaw: Okay. I might have asked you this before, forgive me. How many Masons are buried in the cemetery?

Maris: I'm aware of one hundred and—you say Masons—I'll say there are 142 members. There are more Masons than that buried up there. Some are very recently, too, so I believe you could say there's probably up to 145 to 148 or so. I haven't seen the current burials to find out any that maybe needed to be added to my list, my directory.

Thornhill: And Alex [Brokaw], how many plots are there total in the cemetery?

Brokaw: We are having a survey taken right now by the best people in Oregon that do this type of thing. And what I heard at the last board meeting was that we have 207, or excuse me 2079 markers in the cemetery and 155 that need repairs, and we're starting in on that project, too.

Maris: There are many more plots or lots within plots up there that have no markers on them, so we're not answering your fundamental question. We have to go back to the ten-acre layout to take that number, and it's way up. It is much larger than that number of monuments up there, but I just don't have the number.

Brokaw: They're just looking at the monuments, that's all they are surveying.

Maris: They're not including all of the burial locations. I'll call it that.

The cremains. Yeah, the cremains scatter garden—in which that phrase is probably not being used now—it doesn't account for those lots and plots which are part of the original offering that was possible for burials.

Brokaw: Yeah, I think they're just doing this mainly so they can find all the stones that need repairs.

Maris: It's an enhancement to the Donovan survey in 1995, which I had access to. And in 1905, the Lodge did a survey of everything they could find up there at that time, which I also have in the records. And it's interesting because that time they said there's this very small depression here within a monument, where we think that possibly an infant was buried here. So in 1905 they were doing surveys of what they could find at that time, which we do have in the records.

Brokaw: All right. I think we're close to the end of the interview. Is there anything else that you would like to say or bring up—a topic?

Maris: No, not necessarily. I think I've jabbered on quite a few different things because, like I just said, my primary interest up there is keeping the monuments and

markers maintained and preserved, not overgrown and lost. Because they're all going to deteriorate anyway. There are very few granite ones. Too many sandstone ones, which will—and limestone—which will erode away, and I would like to see the mausoleum, the interior, the engaged columns inside there that were completed, because that was part of our donation. The money was for that marble inside the mausoleum. I would like to see that completed.

Brokaw: Just to let you know, at our last board meeting [we were told] we are doing more work in the mausoleum. And I think why you came on the board has really come to fruition, because the markers and the headstones have become very important, and not to say that the landscape is not—it'll still be a beautiful landscape—but we are taking great care with the grave markers.

Maris: I appreciate that, because that was the original purpose for having that piece of land set aside, for those burials. And a place for people to go up as they used to to—have a picnic there—reflect back. I think that still needs to be done, but the function of the cemetery is for that purpose, not for flora and fauna. That's just my bias position.

Thornhill: And Rich, I want to circle back to the beginning of the interview. This is in relation to the natural landscape of the cemetery. Originally it was pretty much just like all grass, and so there's many trees there now, and how did those trees get there?

Maris: Most of them were planted, I believe—now this is my belief—by people. When they bury or have a coffin burial quite often it's common to plant something. Now there's a passage in Christian scripture which talks about holding a bough to the nose, and so the idea of immortality of the soul passing through a living growth is present. If people are aware of it, they've done enough study and so they think they would plant something just out of a habit. Possibly knowing that, possibly not, but they planted most of the things up there, and they just grew and took over. But, as you said, it was just a grassy knoll, so everything had been planted by people, not the City of Eugene, not indigenous on its own.

Brokaw: So, at that time—

Maris: We created our own forest, which people think, “Hey, it was always this way,” and it wasn't. Some of the old photographs of Eugene do show the early Douglas-firs out there all by themselves, but they had been planted.

Thornhill: So just for my own understanding, so for each Douglas-fir that is planted in that cemetery there was someone who was buried underneath it?

Maris: Not necessarily. Somehow a tree was planted that, you know—and some of the trees are not Douglas-firs, some of those are other types of shrubbery and I think Alex [Brokaw] and the other people who are more—I'm trying to remember, who's our board member who's been on there a long time from Temple Beth Israel?

Brokaw: Roz.

Maris: Yes, Roz probably is aware of some of the different plants that are up there, both native and non-native species.

But yeah, everything was put in there, for one reason or another. Sometimes like birds flying over with cherry seeds in their beaks, drop them and a cherry tree grows up along the fence where they sit and eat cherries on a fence line, and I can't say how that happened.

Thornhill: You mentioned someone named Roz, what is her last name?

Brokaw: Oh darn, her last name is slipping my mind right now, but—

Maris: I don't remember it. I remember she is probably the last present member out of that landscape committee and focus. I may be wrong.

Brokaw: Let me see, Roz Slovic—did a quick look-up here—is her name. S-L-O-V-I-C. Okay, and she isn't—

Maris: I do not believe in the original—I'll call it—plotting of the cemetery that there are any areas set aside, as there are now, for Jewish burial. Temple Beth Israel has one site—let's call it a north-central part—and then there's another area in the southwestern area where there are a number of Hebrew burials, but originally, I don't think that—I have no idea how that came about because the Temple Beth Israel site is dedicated with stones at its corners the way it should be done.

Brokaw: And that came about—

Maris: As far as I know there are no Moslem burials up there. I think those are all taken up to Corvallis [Oregon]. And it would be a fairly liberal, not a conservative Islamic type of burial that happens. As far as I know, there are none in our cemetery. I brought that question up at one time and I was shot down, saying you're going down a road that we don't want to go down. We're not going to talk about religions or faith—who are buried or not buried in the cemetery. And I still have that very curious—

Brokaw: The cemetery is open to anyone of any religion.

Maris: Yes, it is. But I could not find out if there have ever been any Islamic burials there. I know there have been others that—and we know the plots for Temple Beth Israel in Hebrew, Christian or whatever. People, they may be an atheist and they can be buried up there. That was one avenue. I was told don't pursue it at the time.

Brokaw: I don't know anything about that. We are open to everyone.

Okay, I want to thank you, Rich. This has been very interesting, I must say.

Maris: Well, like I said, we have a lot of very, very interesting information buried within the minutes of the meetings [Masonic Lodge minutes], so it would just be a case of going through, finding it, pulling it out as it's related to any activities related to the cemetery ground itself, as they used to call it the bury ground. B-U-R-Y.

Brokaw: The bury ground. Okay.

Maris: Bury ground, that's how it appears in our minutes. [In] the very first references, we were asked to form a cemetery, and after that it's always "bury ground." It's a little bit later they started calling it a cemetery.

Brokaw: That's great history right there. I had no idea. So, I want to thank you again, and I guess we'll sign off. Any more questions?

Maris: Thank you for the invitation and hobbling me through here, you having to use a smartphone instead of Zoom.

Brokaw: And Rich, would you stay on the line.

Maris: I won't hang up my phone until I'm told to.

Thornhill: Thank you so much. Thank you for participating in this oral history, Rich. I'm now going to turn the recording off.

End of Interview.

Addendum

Book V - Lodge Minutes related to the Mausoleum

As transcribed from jpg minute books' pages' images by Richard G. Maris, Lodge Secretary, March 2021

Page 455 June 5, 1912 On motion of Bro Whalittam the Lodge ordered the road leading from Alder Street leading to the Masonic Cemetery fenced on the north side and closed against being used as a public throughfare.

Page 460 July 17 1912 See covering paper bottom of page for Cemetery Committee

Page 468 Sept 18, 1912 Labor was suspended to give Bro. L.L.H. Austin opportunity to resent his arrangements in favor of a Mausoleum to be erected by the Portland Mausoleum Company if the support of the Lodge can be secured. After discussion the proposal was taken from the table and a motion was offered that a committee of three be chosen to examine into the question of a site – if possible wherein the present Cemetery or outside and gthe price at which it can be secured – Carried Brothers G..H. McMorran, E.O. Potter, and J.B. Patterson were appointed.

On motion of Bro Bogart the Lodge expressed its approval of the Mausoleum Plans presented by Bro. Auslim for his Company.

Page 469 October 2, 1912 The Committee appointed to report on site for Mausoleum offered the following

To the W.M. Wardens and brethren of Eugene Lodge #11 AFAM Your special Committee appointed to select a site in or near to the Masonic Cemetery for a Mausoleum, beg leave respectfully to report, that after careful investigation and consideration and deliberation they recommend that a plot of grounds on the west line of the Cemetery beginning at a point near where the road leading south turns into the Cemetery grounds, and pursues an easterly course. From this point near said road the plot extends south 132 feet, thence west 48 feet, thence north 132 feet, thence east 48 feet, and included streets or alleys to

the place of beginning embracing Lots 240, 241, 242, 243, 277, 278, 279, 280, 313, 314, and included streets or alleys.

Your Committee Considers this the most suitable of all the locations proposed for the said building. Fraternaly, Singed by Geo H. McMorran, E O Pattern, JB Patterson

Adopted

Page 470 Oct 2, 1912 Resolution adopted That the special Committee to which a site in the Masonic Cemetery for a Mausoleum be and the same is hereby instructed and authorizing to take the necessary legal steps and proceedings for the vacations of all alleys, and Streets. The vacation of which will be necessary for the location of the said Mausoleum. Agreement adopted

Know All Men by these Presents, that whereas Eugene Lodge #11 AFAM is desirous of entering into a Contract with the Portland Mausoleum Company, for the erection of a Mausoleum on the Cemetery of the said Eugene Lodge of Eugene, Oregon and whereas the grounds upon which said Mausoleum is to be constructed and established in said Cemetery is composed partly of Streets or Alleys laid out in said Cemetery, Now therefore, the said Eugene Lodge #11 AFAM does hereby agree that it will be at once proceed to take such steps as are necessary to vacate said Streets or Alleys, so as to make them applicable for the purposed aforesaid, and that when such vacation is made it will enter into a contract with said Portland Mausoleum Company for the erection of said Mausoleum, said contract to be the one hereto attached marked "Exhibit A" and hereby made a part hereof, it being understood and agreed that if the said Eugene Lodge fails to procure the vacations of said streets or alleys, so that they could be devoted to the purposes aforesaid, then no obligation or liability shall accrue to the said Eugene Lodge on account of this instrument.

Dated this second day of October 1912} signed by George W. Norris, Worshipful Master; J.B. Patterson, Senior Warden; K.K. Mills, Junior Warden

Page 477 Nov 20, 1912 The Committee to whom was referred the matter of receiving the vacancies of Certain Lots in the Masonic Cemetery for space to erect a Mausoleum offered the papers effecting a legal vacation which into the signatures of the Officers of the Lodge Completed the place as heretofore recorded.

Page 489 Feb 5, 1913 After much discussion the articles of agreement between Eugene Lodge 11 and the Portland Mausoleum Co were amended as will appear in report of Committee from Lodge

Book VI - Lodge Minutes related to the Mausoleum

Page 16 June 24, 1913 Minutes related to the agreement with Portland Eugene and Eastern RR CO. acquisition of property for the rail road tracks crossing the NE corner of the Masonic Cemetery and agreement details including "to provide special funeral cars for the Masonic bodies for 46.00 per car."

Page 21 Sept 17, 1913 The Committee to which was referred the request for a deed to ground in the Masonic Cemetery on which to erect a Mausoleum make their report which was placed on file with other papers pertaining thereto.

Page 45 Feb 18, 1914 The Trustees made a report on the nonfulfillment of a Contract by Tho Bible Chiswarson in regard to University and Cemetery road and through to the Lodge to adjust the matter by such proceedings as necessary.

Page 64 May 20, 1914 Petition of Mausoleum Co. for permissions to cut corners of 2 lots in Cemetery in making road was referred to Trustees with power to act.

Page 68 June 3, 1914 Trustees were authorized by vote of the Lodge to secure the building of a new fence around Cemetery.

Dedication of Hope Abbey Mausoleum on June 14, 1914 for which there are no lodge minutes found.

Page 70 June 17, 1914 Judge Colvig then appeared in the interest of the PE & Eastern Railway relative to completion of contract between the RR and Eugene Lodge #11 about crossing the NE corner of Cemetery and securing deeds for the realty taken. The following was adopted by the Lodge

Be it resolved that Eugene Lodge #11 AFAM immediately issue its deed of conveyance to and in favor of the Portland Eugene & Easter Railroad Co, its successors and assigns a good and sufficient deed of conveyance of a strip of land 20 feet in width over and across the North east corner of the Masonic Cemetery over which the line of railway is now laid and operated, and a further strip of 20 feet in width immediately east along said first mentioned strip of land, which deed of conveyance, to mention the consideration for which said deed is executed being the payment of the sum [continued on following page 71] of twenty five dollars, and the expressed agreement by said grantee the Portland Eugene and Eastern Railroad Co. that it will at all times furnish to, as demanded by said grantor, and run and operate funeral cars from the City of Eugene to and from said Masonic Cemetery at and for a charge of no greater sum than five dollars for each and every car to run and operate from said cemetery. That said deed be filed with the Secretary of said MSONIC Lodge to be held in escrow until the said grantee shall have performed all of the conditions of the contract and agreement between said parties, by the execution of a good and sustainable fence on both sides of the lands granted in said deed; the erection and

construction of two gates and a crossing over the tracks and lands so conveyed connecting the two parts of said cemetery served by the line of railroad and the payment by said grantee to said grantor of all sums of money charged for funeral cars in excess of the agreed price of five dollars per car, which has been charged and collected by said grantee from said grantor.

Page 106 Feb 17, 1915 On motion the matter of price to be charged per month for the use of the receiving vaults in the Mausoleum be referred to the Trustees and the terms agreed upon the reported back to the Lodge.