

When I was a Warden on my way to being Master in 1980 there was a sojourner who was present at virtually all of our meetings. This sojourner was Joe Sallee. In talking with Bro Joe, I found out that he had recently been hired as the head person for the City of Fresno garbage department. He had previously held that position for the City of Ontario.

I soon learned that Brother Joe was Master of Ontario Lodge No. 301. It was during 1977 that he moved to Fresno at which time he had to travel many times to Ontario to perform his duties as Master. Bro Joe affiliated with Las Palmas in 1979 and starting in 2009 until 2017 he was our Assistant Secretary.

In our various conversations he informed me that he lost his first wife to cancer and that he was in remission from cancer. Every day he lived with the thought that if his cancer returned, it would soon bring about his death. Thankfully he was able to live an additional 45 years.

Although Bro Joe did not attend Lodge very often for the last few years, he must have thought about me as a month ago he contacted our secretary and asked for my e-mail address which I quickly provided to him. Unfortunately, I never heard back from him as he passed away on April 1st.

As I scan our old Minutes for the Lodge archives, I occasionally notice something that we did back then, but would probably not do today. If a member died and had a Masonic funeral, Lodge had to be opened in the 3rd degree before the Master and brethren could go to the funeral home or church to give the Masonic funeral. After returning from the cemetery or crematorium, they had to resume Lodge, appoint three members to write the eulogy for the Lodge records and then close Lodge.

This practice took place from the very beginning of our Lodge in 1905 until 1955 when Grand Lodge must have changed this practice and our Funeral ritual. It resumed by our officers on a case-by-case basis in 1959. In the very early days think about how much time it would take for the Lodge officers to get to Lodge, go to the funeral home or church and then go to the cemetery all on horseback or horse drawn carriage. Today to go to the cemetery in Reedley would be about a 30-minute drive, but back in the 1930's it took our officers in their Model T a half day to get there, do the graveside and return back to Fresno.