

Partners in Outreach | Evergreen Lodge No. 259

Susan's* husband died a year ago on Valentine's Day, just after the holidays. Although she had no relatives left to look after her, she did have her fraternal family.

Susan and Harold were both members of the Order of the Eastern Star, and Harold was a past master at Evergreen Lodge No. 259 in Riverside. When Harold passed away, Susan asked one of his brothers, John Channon, to organize a Masonic funeral.

Afterward, John did what family does: He stuck around. He checked in on Susan, who is 90, and helped with life insurance paperwork. He stopped by every few days to go through the mail and make sure the bills were paid. He helped with her taxes and kept an eye on her living expenses. He boosted her favorite couch to make it easier to get into and out of.

A longtime friend from Eastern Star, Cheryl, helped with grocery shopping and medical appointments, and she and John became a team. After a little while, Susan asked to give John and Cheryl power of attorney over her affairs. They were the two people she trusted most, she said.

When Susan's health first began to fail, John and Cheryl sought out quality caregivers to come to the house. But some months later, Susan's health declined dramatically, and she could no longer afford to live at home. They realized they were out of their depth. As an inspector, John was active in the Lodge Outreach Program, and attended the quarterly meetings led by Masonic Outreach Services (MOS) staff. He decided to contact MOS for guidance. They sent an application for Susan, and began searching right away for a better living solution. They soon secured a spot at a board-and-care community, and Susan moved in last month.

If not for John and Cheryl, Susan might have faced this time of loss, and the many uncertainties that accompanied it, alone. If not for MOS, she might not be in a safe living situation now. Her fraternal family and MOS continue to partner for her: MOS has approved financial assistance so she can afford housing in her new community. Evergreen Lodge has pledged full support and manpower for squaring away her house and affairs.

And at John's request, MOS plans to hold a training session at his upcoming Officers School of Instruction. "When somebody needs help, lodge leaders need to know how to step in," John says. "They need to know there are resources – that they can help and that they're not alone."

He wants his lodges to get the word out, because too many members hesitate to ask for help. "Masonry is an organization that expects its members to give and receive assistance. We makes relief a priority," he says. "When you have a way to be of use to someone, then as a Mason, you step up and do it."

**Names changed for client privacy*

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