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Maybe it was that love for rural life and the outdoors that regularly drew George Grigorieff, a 63-year-old homeless man, to southeast Portland's Lone Fir Cemetery to sleep.

With Portland's cemeteries unlit and few people wandering through them at night, a cemetery would be a peaceful place for someone homeless like Grigorieff to sleep.

"You're not in a place where you're going to be found easily," says Brad Taylor, an outreach worker with the outreach agency JOIN.

Sometime between the wee hours of Friday, December 19 and Monday, December 22, Portland's unusual bout of frigid, snowy weather did what many outreach and social service workers expected and dreaded: it killed a homeless person.

A passerby walking through Lone Fir found Grigorieff on the afternoon of December 22. After the person called 911, Grigorieff's body was taken to the Medical Examiner's office, the state office charged with investigating suspicious deaths.

According to Deputy Medical Examiner Tom Chappelle, the probable cause of Grigorieff's death was hypothermia. Chappelle also says that it is impossible to determine exactly when Grigorieff died.

"That's only television," he says dryly.

Chappelle did say, however, that it appears that Grigorieff died after the snowfall of the December 20-21 weekend.

"He was not covered in snow," Chappelle says. "He looked fresh."

A regular in the downtown and southeast areas of Portland, Grigorieff regularly slept in Lone Fir, says Portland police officer Andrew Edgecomb, who patrols the area around Lone Fir Cemetery. Edgecomb said he never had any problems with Grigorieff. He also said that when drinking, Grigorieff could be "cantankerous."

Grigorieff's alcohol abuse brought him into multiple interactions with the police and landed him in jail countless times. Grigorieff also had a long record of trespassing on private property and interfering with public transportation.

According to records obtained from the

Multnomah County Sheriff's office, Grigorieff had been booked a total of 42 times since 2001, and has been in and out of the criminal justice system since 1985.

Grigorieff was arrested at 10:55 in the evening on Thursday, Dec. 18 for failure to appear in court for three outstanding warrants. Two of the warrants were for drinking in public places. A third was for interfering with public transportation.

Booked at downtown Portland's Justice Center, Grigorieff wore jail blues while his two pairs of pants, two sweatshirts, hooded jacket, stocking cap and socks were washed and dried.

He was released at 2:08 a.m. on Dec. 19 on the condition he would appear in court at 1:45 that afternoon for arraignment. The temperature that night fell as low as 32 degrees.

Normally, there are no shelters or other social services open at the time of night Grigorieff was released. But the city's newly formed warming centers were open all night to ensure as many people as possible could escape the weather.

Did Grigorieff know that the warming centers were open? Was he told, upon release, where to go?

Multnomah County Sheriff public information officer Paul McRedmond says that written notices detailing the warming centers' location and hours were posted in multiple places in the Justice Center. The lobby of the Justice Center was acting as a warming center as well.

McRedmond does not know if the police talked to Grigorieff about the warming centers.

The Justice Center's policy is to release people any time of the day, seven days a week. Because Grigorieff's warrants were nothing more serious than violations, he could not be legally kept in jail overnight.

"He was not keepable," McRedmond says. "We can't take our civil liberties away from him once he has fulfilled his legal requirements. But he had choices."

McRedmond says Grigorieff could have gone to the warming centers or stayed in the Justice Center's lobby. If he had asked, McRedmond says a police officer would have taken Grigorieff to one of the warming centers.

He did not. McRedmond says that was

typical of Grigorieff — every time the police offered Grigorieff a diversion program or other services over the years, "he always turned the stuff down."

Grigorieff's stubborn refusal to access services does not surprise his step-brother. Jim Grigorieff is convinced George made the choice throughout his life to be homeless. It's a consequence of his step-brother's stubbornness and independence, he thinks.

"He liked the idea of doing things his own way," Jim Grigorieff says. "He liked the idea of being self sufficient. He didn't want to live off someone else's dole."

For a long time, George Grigorieff did live off of others. That started when he returned from a tour in Vietnam in 1967. His return, his step-brother says, marked the beginning of Grigorieff's heavy and frequent drinking, and his inability to hold down a job.

He lived with friends and family, beginning to wear out his welcome and fatigue his loved

ones. Around 1978, what Jim Grigorieff calls "a major thing" happened, marking a pivotal moment in Grigorieff's descent into chronic homelessness.

While staying with his family in Woodburn, Grigorieff drunkenly knocked over a space heater in his room. His hands and face were badly burned and scarred. The heater started a fire that burned the house down.

A few years later, Grigorieff somehow injured himself again, breaking a number of ribs that never healed. Jim Grigorieff took him to the veterans' hospital for treatment, and from that point forward, persistently tried to find services that could help his brother.

"I really tried to advocate for him," Jim Grigorieff says.

1998 proved the key year. For about a month, Grigorieff was staying at a residential treatment facility for veterans in White City, Ore. "On his own will, he

chose to leave," Jim Grigorieff says.

George Grigorieff traveled to Salem, and then to Woodburn, to stay out back of a small business Jim had opened. George would build fires out of tires and other garbage he found and bring animals and fish to the camp, which was within city limits. Jim Grigorieff says it was clear to anyone who passed by that someone was living where someone should not.

Because there were no services that Jim could find to help his brother unless George willingly entered them, Jim's last resort would be to have a restraining order issued against his brother. He considered it, because George's camp was beginning to affect his business.

Then, Jim received a call from the local veterans' hospital: while riding his bike into the woods to hike or fish, George had been run over. He received medical services, but Jim never heard directly from him again.

"Out of stubbornness or knowing he burned his bridges, he didn't really come back to any of his [family]," Jim Grigorieff says. After that 1998 incident, George Grigorieff never asked his friends or family for lodging or help again. They next call for help his family would receive on George's behalf would be to claim his body.

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Indigent. Decedent. Skeletonized. The body. Final disposition.

The terminology used by the Medical Examiner's office referring to the dead people they work with encapsulates the emotional distance medical examiners maintain when dealing with one of the most mysterious and distressing of human experiences: death.

"I can't invest any of my emotion in these cases, because after a while it would break (my) heart," Chappelle says.

"He was not keepable. We can't take our civil liberties away from him once he has fulfilled his legal requirements. But he had choices."

— PAUL MCREDMOND
MULTNOMAH COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

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Holiday's Next Show

By Jay Thiemeyer

a figure too loose to tell
what sort, could be shaman
as easily as not,
shaman in rags, once
called mendicant friar
or worse, Could be anything.

A person familiar. A shaman or a mindless one
sleeps tonight in a doorway
dreaming of days beset
by a Xian holiday good for commerce He can deal
with flashbacks
of the good times long-gone.
They were just dreams.
Tho the turkey and pumpkin
pie at the feeds
aren't undesirable, the rest
he would leave alone

if he could choose. The people, the do-gooders nosy,
wanting to know — everything, all the damned time —
If it were his life again.

Back when he won out
and was still so young.

a mendicant of unknown orientation, where from, up to what,
a brother juniper or trickster.
It's the not being able
to choose

that makes it all so cramped and crazy these days;
the being told what he should think.

Combined
with all the imposed festivities,

all the feigned happiness
he has to endure
on the bus, walking along
the sidewalk, standing in the inescapable
lines,
skipping between
cars like bulls on the run.
The occasional pursuit
of nothing in particular.
His daily adventures of freedom,
joy or un-joy,
and imagination,
know no season
or country or historical fix.
there is no need to explain.
Cars can be horses,
bulls can be sheep.
Sheep driving, that's a fact isn't it?
A brother gets lonely
for sure. Driven by one thing
and another,
all of it unseen and unknown.
Shamans in rags sleeping in doorways
are simply unusual
in this so-usual day.
Don't piss on them please.
A moan may ensue. A goat's hoof.
Who needs to know what's under that lint blanket?