

# Grier: 'The kindest, most sincere man you could meet'

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deeply, too. They have lost an inspirational lodge brother who served as their chaplain for 45 years.

Mike Carmel of Long Beach, a past master of Occident No. 48, Free & Accepted Masons, serves as a district officer in southwest Washington. "Norman Grier epitomized the ideals of Freemasonry in his practice of civility and kindness, while maintaining the highest standards for his own personal conduct," he said.

"As recently as a few months ago, before he turned 88, Brother Norm delivered a beautiful Masonic lecture straight from memory that required about 30 minutes of letter-perfect recitation and it was just about one year ago that, under doctor's orders, he stopped splitting wood for his fireplace."

## Sports fan

Grier followed Ilwaco and Naselle youth sports, especially basketball, attending games, keeping newspaper clippings and delighting in family members' successes. He was a fixture, shucking corn at the Ilwaco sports booster wagon at the Kite Festival in Long Beach, a familiar figure in big hat and sunglasses.

Granddaughter Marie Green had a stellar sports career at Ilwaco High School (as Marie Wroble) and later coached at Naselle and in Oregon. She treasures her grandfather's scrapbooks and recalls he even "scouted" visiting teams by clipping newspaper stories from outside the area.

"The last coherent conversation I had with my grandpa was about my basketball team and how our games went over the weekend and what do I expect out of the season," said Green, head coach for Knappa girls. "That will be what I will miss the most with him — our sporting chats. Even though I wasn't playing but coaching, he would come to a handful of games to show his support for what I was doing. That meant the world to me."

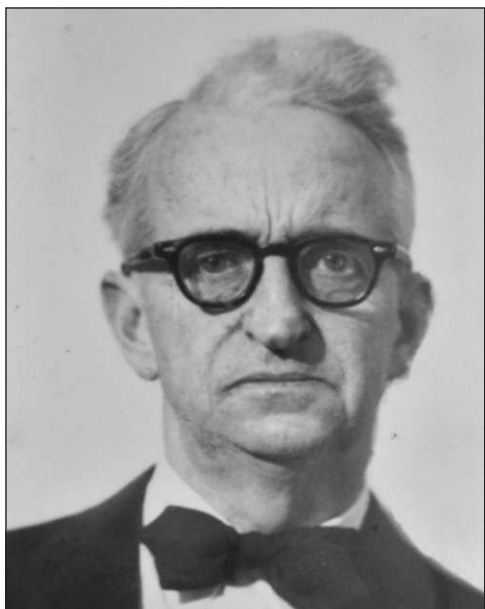
## Worked for county

In addition to his community life, Grier was known throughout the region for his professional activities.

Grier was building roads for the state of Washington in the late 1960s when a falling lump of clay broke both his legs at the site of the Washington Plaza Hotel in Seattle. After a lengthy recovery, he joined the staff of Pacific County in 1971 as a survey party chief. Later, he was promoted to assistant county



LEFT: Norm Grier was master of the Ilwaco Freemasons lodge in 1960. RIGHT: Norm Grier's father, William Grier, was master of the Ilwaco, Wash., lodge in 1948.



Mike Thornton/Submitted Photos

engineer, retiring some years ago. Until last month, he served on the county's Flood Control Board.

Workmate Chuck Mikkola of Ocean Park, who succeeded Grier when he retired, recalls his balanced temperament. "He was very congenial," Mikkola recalled. "People would holler and scream at him," because Grier was scrupulous in enforcing legal regulations. "He would still maintain his composure and sometimes just end the conversation."

One day their work crew parked their truck with the windows open and hiked into Raymond, returning to a surprise, Mikkola said. "As we got closer, we saw something moving inside the Suburban, a tail, and we thought at first it was a coyote." Instead, a pack of dogs from a nearby farmhouse had climbed inside. "They had got into Norm's lunch pail and eaten it all," Mikkola said. "Most of us would have wanted to shoot the dog, but Norm said, 'They have to eat, too,'" he said.

## Seaview move

Norm Grier's father, William, was born in Scotland, and came to the United States as a child. During World War I, he served in the U.S. Army Expeditionary Force in France.

William and his wife, Auda, spent their honeymoon in the 1920s in Ocean Park at a house where longtime Nahcotta oysterman Dobby Wiegardt and his wife, Lila, later lived. Wiegardt graduated from Ilwaco High School in 1948, some three years behind Norm Grier, who was in his

sister Ann's class. They were lifelong friends.

The Grier family had lived in Portland, then moved to Knappton in the 1940s when William, an accountant, went to work in the sawmill. His other son, Bill, was an Eighth Air Force co-pilot whose B-17 was shot down on a bombing raid over Nazi-held Holland in 1943 and did not survive a parachute drop into the North Sea.

The same year the Griers moved to Seaview.

## Chaplain's role

William Grier was master of the Ilwaco Masons lodge in 1948 and spent a dozen years as its chaplain. Norm Grier served as master in 1960 then moved to the chaplain's chair.

In a light-hearted father's day interview in the *Chinook Observer* a few years ago, a reporter asked Norm Grier what was the best advice he had received.

Noting that Masons cannot directly recruit, Grier replied, "My father advised me in his own way — secretly, I should say, he didn't come out and say it — but secretly, he wanted me to join the Masonic lodge. And I've been pretty active in that over the years; I still attend and enjoy it."

"Pretty active"? A modest understatement.

the informality of the dining room at the Spruce Street lodge hall, Grier's prayers strayed from the wording enshrined in the Masonic codebook, using a delightful conversational approach as he sought blessings on the man who cooked his lunch or another member in ailing health.

## Declining health

This past two years, Grier's regular attendance at the Masons' informal Wednesday lunches wavered as his own health see-sawed. Each time Grier missed, Carmel would report on his latest ailment and the progress of his recovery. Usually, Grier would return in a week or two, grinning, shrugging off a hospital visit or another course of treatment, fiddling with his hearing aid to make sure he could understand the latest chatter at the dining table.

But less than a month ago, an angiogram revealed a damaged heart valve and a severe coronary artery blockage. A stent was inserted, but doctors determined the damage was already too severe for further treatment.

When Carmel went to Grier's home Thursday, the ailing Grier reached out with a Masonic handshake and

insisted on standing up.

"When I stopped to visit as his health was rapidly failing four days before his death, he took my hand with the grip of a Master Mason and gave me a huge smile, then, despite his illness, rose to say goodbye to me and the master-elect of Occident Lodge, Ron Robbins of Klipsan," Carmel said. "He also whispered to me about Ron, 'That's the fellow who has done so many great things for the lodge!'"

## 'Kind'

Robbins was installed as master of the lodge Saturday. Through the beautiful symmetry of small-town connections, that afternoon's substitute chaplain — offering a special prayer for Grier — was Wiegardt, who served as the lodge's master in 1962, two years after his friend.

When asked for a tribute to his contemporary, the 85-year-old Wiegardt did not hesitate. "I think the word 'gentleman' is a good one," he said, then added. "A kind gentleman."

Granddaughter Green echoed that view. "He was the kindest and most sincere man you could meet," she said. "Anyone who met him would fall in love with him and his wonderful spirit."

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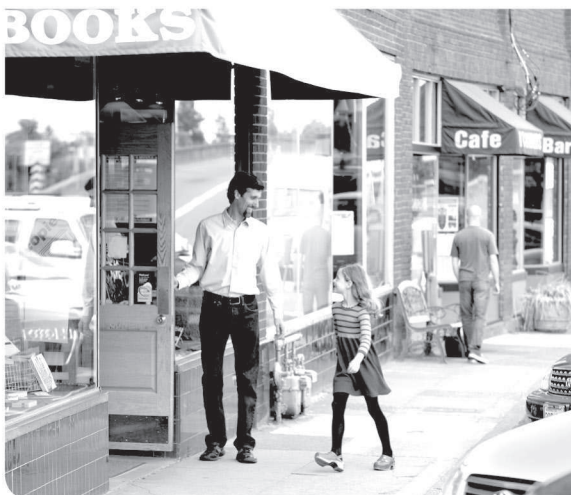
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