

For 70 years, sunrise service more than worship for Lakewood woman

HIGHLIGHTS

Eunice Doolittle has visited Easter sunrise service every year since 1947

Visits gravesites of family members and places flowers each year

“I remember good things, the good memories we had,” she said



Sunrise Easter service at Mountain View Funeral Home in Lakewood on | Sunday, March 27, 2016

BY DEAN J. KOEPFLER

Eunice Doolittle didn't get to enjoy a brilliant sunrise on Easter.

An ashen morning sky and a chilling wind greeted her and other worshippers Sunday at the Sunrise Easter Service at Mountain View Memorial Park in Lakewood.

As others cocooned themselves in blankets, Doolittle, 91, seemed content with a blanket covering her lap, warmed by the memory of five family members — her mother and father, two sons and husband — who are buried there.

Doolittle of Lakewood has been drawn to the sunrise service since 1947.

For 70 consecutive years, she has endured the elements. She talks about her father, William Schwartz, who was a Lutheran minister, and recalls the time she and her siblings slept on church pews during the construction of one of his churches. She fondly remembers the voice and spirit of her son Michael, who died at 24 from cancer.

“Michael was an entertainer from the word ‘go.’ He was always on stage,” Doolittle said.

Sunday, Doolittle was joined by daughter Donna Waddington. The two cherish going to the services together and putting tulips and daffodils on family graves.

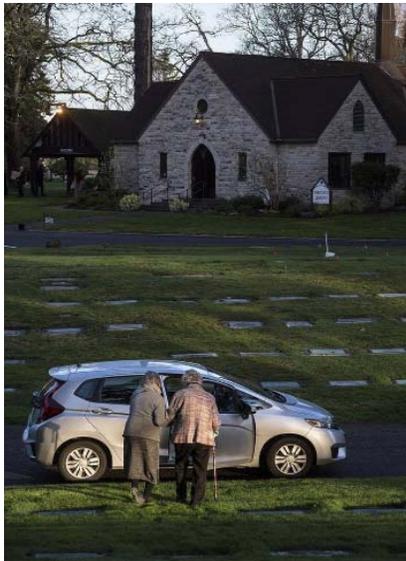


Sitting in the front row of the garden chapel with 100 or so others, Doolittle was surprised by a gift of two flower bouquets from Dan Lasham, an employee at Mountain View for the past 30 years.

“I feel at home here,” Doolittle said. “I really do. I know some people will say to me, ‘I don’t like being in a cemetery. It brings back bad memories.’ But I say no. On the contrary, I remember good things, the good memories we had. We had our ups and downs, but you cope with them and you come back smiling.

“The important thing is to laugh a lot. We laughed a lot in our home.”

After the Rev. James Saxman finished the benediction and the Lakes High School Chamber Choir sang “Ride on, King Jesus,” Doolittle and her daughter watched as white doves, released from two cages, circled above.



“It’s flower time,” Waddington said, patting her mom on the shoulders.

Steadied by her daughter and a cane, Doolittle struggled to climb a knoll to her parents’ graves. “It’s hard to get up here,” she whispered. As the pair crested the hill, “Daddy’s right here,” Doolittle said pointing with her cane.

The chilly, breezy morning began to take its toll on Doolittle, who had referred to herself as “a tough bird” as the service was beginning more than hour before.

“We normally spend more time talking about each family member, but we got so cold this morning that mom said, ‘Let’s go, they’ll understand,’” Waddington said as she settled her mom into the car. “We laughed that we gave them the brush-off.”

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