

# Lee Mission Cemetery Newsletter

January 2026



## From the President

### Looking Ahead to Spring

As winter starts to loosen its grip, I wanted to share a few updates and thoughts about **Lee Mission Cemetery**.

First, a sincere thank you to **our volunteers**. Your time, effort, and care keep this place running. Whether you're helping with maintenance, cleanup, or stepping in when something unexpected comes up, your work truly matters—and it shows.

Speaking of the unexpected, we continue to face **ongoing and unplanned expenses**. Repairs, upkeep, and security issues don't always come with warning, and they add up quickly. We are incredibly grateful to our **donors**, whose generosity helps us manage these costs and continue caring for the cemetery.

We are also dealing with a few ongoing challenges. The presence of **unhoused individuals seeking shelter in the cemetery** is a difficult and sensitive situation. While compassion is important, we must also ensure safety and maintain the respect this space deserves. The Board is actively working to address this responsibly.

Another reminder: **please do not drive or park on the grass**, and do not move barricades. Even though the grass stays green through the winter, it is especially vulnerable right now. Vehicles cause damage that is costly and time-consuming to repair once spring arrives.

Unfortunately, we have seen an **increase in vandalism**. While the cemetery cannot be responsible for personal items left at gravesites or for individual graves being targeted, vandalism of any kind is not acceptable and deeply troubling. If you see suspicious activity or damage, please report it.

Our **Board members** continue to volunteer many hours behind the scenes to keep things moving forward. As spring approaches, there will be more work to do—and more opportunities to help.

If you are able, **we welcome new volunteers**, and **donations of any size** make a real difference. Both help ensure that Lee Mission Cemetery remains a place of peace, respect, and remembrance.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we can take good care of this special place as we head into a new season.

# Lee Mission Cemetery Donations July—December 2025

## Friend: \$1-\$49

Karen Ro Heuberger  
*In memory of Mr. & Mrs.  
Roe Betterton*  
Mary J Brock  
*In memory of Margaret  
Hadley Irvine*

## Supporter: \$50-\$99

Benito Sierra Granados  
Ken L Betterton

## Sponsor: \$100-\$249

Andrea & David Turner  
Thomas & Patricia Glass  
Maria Hernandez  
*In memory of Luis Daniel  
Hernandez*  
David R Shaw  
Ted Stang  
*In memory of Phyllis Gillis  
& Mimi Stang*

William & Mary  
Mainwaring

## Preservation: \$250-\$499

Cora A Hallauer  
*In memory of Robert  
Hallauer*

Gehlar Family

## Historian: \$500-\$2,499

Diana Newport  
Conrad P Mueller

## DONATIONS

**We are deeply appreciative for the past generous donations for unexpected expenses. For these and ongoing needs, any amount you can donate is greatly appreciated.**

Lee Mission Cemetery is a 501(c)13 not-for-profit corporation. All donations are tax deductible. 100% of donations made to the Cemetery go toward improvement and maintenance. Officers and board members volunteer their time and receive no compensation.

Lee Mission Cemetery, P.O. Box 2011,  
Salem, OR 97308

Lee Mission Cemetery is licensed through the Oregon State Mortuary Board.  
Phone: 971-673-1500.

## Board of Directors

Michael Staten, President  
Sherrill Hochspeier, Secretary-Treasurer  
Tom Bowers, Julie Staten,  
Lucinda Jackson, Blake Ritz

## Contact Information

Cemetery Phone - 503-851-1803  
Lot Sales Phone (Rick Hilts) - 503-559-2242  
Web Site - [www.leemissioncemetery.com](http://www.leemissioncemetery.com)

*Comments, additions and corrections regarding website or newsletter can be sent to:*  
[michael@leemissioncemetery.com](mailto:michael@leemissioncemetery.com)

## Lee Mission Cemetery Expenses and Income Year End Report 2025

### INCOME:

Plot Sales [39 plots - 25 burials]	\$ 58,900.00
Donations	11,555.24
Jan \$ 50.00	May \$ 500.00
Feb \$ 5,057.21	Jun \$ 450.00
Mar \$ 2,613.03	Jul \$ 200.00
Apr \$ 200.00	Aug \$ 700.00
	Sep \$ 235.00
	Oct \$ 100.00
	Nov \$ 850.00
	Dec \$ 600.00

### EXPENSES:

Corporation Tax	50.00	
Liability Insurance (Directors)	767.00	
5 Brothers Landscaping (Trees)	580.00	
Newsletter [printing & postage] Feb	647.64	
Outdoor Fence	678.00	
Clean Up Signs	103.03	
R&R Tree Service	3,250.00	
PO Box rental [1 year]	268.00	
Valley Green, Inc.	682.00	
1 Day Signs (3 No Trespassing)	133.50	
2 External Hard Drives	139.98	
Protective Liability	789.00	
Fox Lock and Safe (2 gate padlocks)	62.00	
Donation to Richard M Gillis Scholarship	25.00	
Postage stamps (200)	51.26	
Newsletter [printing & postage] Jul	644.41	
Tracfone	121.31	
5 Brothers (repair of water line)	280.00	
Donation (Rick Hilts)	50.00	
Card & envelopes	5.00	<b>\$ 9,327.13</b>
Security [\$716.00]	\$ 8,592.00	
Republic Sanitation [\$85.40]	1,022.45	
City of Salem (water May-Dec)	2,076.67	
5 Brothers Landscaping Inc	24,000.00	<b>\$ 35,691.12</b>
		<b>25,436.99</b>
Checking Account:	\$ 44,094.97	
Money Market:	21,099.48	

## For the Families and Visitors Who Come Here

Lee Mission Cemetery is, first and foremost, a place for families and friends. It is where people come to remember, to reflect, and to feel close to those they have lost. For many, even a simple visit brings comfort. Because of that, the way the cemetery looks and feels truly matters.

We want every person who walks through the gates to find grounds that are peaceful, well-kept, and treated with care. The appearance of the lawn, the trimming around headstones, and the overall upkeep all contribute to creating a setting that feels respectful and welcoming.

As we move into the spring season, there is important work to be done. Winter leaves behind debris, uneven turf, and areas that need attention. Seasonal clean-up, mowing, and maintenance help ensure that visitors can spend their time here focused on remembrance, not distractions.

Lee Mission Cemetery is community-supported, and maintaining its appearance depends on the generosity of those who value this place. If you are able to volunteer even a few hours during spring clean-up, your help would make a meaningful difference. Financial contributions of any size also go directly toward ongoing maintenance and improvements that benefit every family who visits.

Our shared goal is simple: to care for this cemetery in a way that honors those who rest here and supports the families and visitors who come seeking peace.

Thank you for being part of that commitment.

### Thank You to Our Incredible Volunteers and Donors!

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all our dedicated volunteers and donors.

Your time, effort, financial contributions, and passion have been the heart of our success. We truly appreciate everything you have done to support Lee Mission Cemetery and make a difference.

Thank you for being an essential part of our community!

To volunteer, please contact Blake Ritz at [blakeritz19@gmail.com](mailto:blakeritz19@gmail.com)

To donate, please contact Sherrill Hochspeier at [s.a.hochspeier@comcast.net](mailto:s.a.hochspeier@comcast.net)

## Lee Mission Cemetery Rules and Regulations

### English

<http://leemissioncemetery.com/LMCemeteryRules-English.html>

### Español

<http://leemissioncemetery.com/LMCemeteryRules-Spanish.html>

## Land Acknowledgement

*We acknowledge that the Cemetery is on Kalapuya Illihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of Kalapuya peoples who were forcibly removed to what are now the Grand Ronde and Siletz reservations.*

## Sacrifices Remembered

By guest author, **Margaret Stephens**

Merrill Gragg Van Cleve  
1919-1943



Merrill Van Cleve, from Salem, Oregon, was a Torpedoman's Mate aboard the submarine USS Pickerel, US Navy.

The Pickerel was a porpoise class submarine built in 1935. The Pickerel was the first submarine to be lost in the Central Pacific area. She set out from Pearl Harbor on 18 March 1943 and, after topping off with fuel at Midway on 22 March, began her seventh war patrol off the eastern coast of northern Honshu. She was never heard from after her departure from Midway.

She had been ordered to remain in her area until sunset 1 May 1943 and then to return to Midway. Standing orders required her to transmit by radio prior to entering a circle of radius 500 miles from Midway, and this report was expected by 6 May. When it was not received, a message ordering an immediate reply was repeatedly sent. No answer was received, and plane search along her expected course revealed nothing. As a result, she was reported lost on 12 May 1943. She was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 19 August 1943.

There were 74 men aboard. The cause of destruction was likely a depth charge by enemy forces. Nothing has been found of the submarine and crew.

Merrill Van Cleve was survived by his parents (buried in Lee Mission), his wife Alice, and his siblings. He was preceded in death by a brother, Vernon C. Van Cleve, who died at three months of age, and who is buried in Lee Mission. His brother, Joseph David Van Cleve, 1921-1945, was a 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Corps. While serving with the 252nd Bomb Squadron, 3rd Base Unit Joseph was killed in a plane crash in Medina Texas, and is buried in Oak Lawn Memorial Park Corvallis.

In addition to the gravestone in Lee Mission Cemetery, there is a memorial to Van Cleve and crewmates at the Honolulu Memorial in the Courts of the Missing. The Honolulu Memorial is located within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific near the center of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Another memorial to the Pickerel and crew can be found in the 52 Boats Memorial, San Diego, Calif.

Merrill Van Cleve's award: Purple Heart.

Information compiled from various sources.



*Lee Mission Cemetery  
PO Box 2011  
Salem, OR 97308*