



# Newsletter

May 2021

## FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

This is an exciting time for River View as we welcome new board members and employees and expand our burial, cremation placement, and memorialization options. We hope you enjoy reading about these new developments.

There have been many transitions in the past few years with the retirement of **David Noble**, who served River View as the Executive Director for 16 years. His years of service included bringing natural burial to the cemetery and Aqua Cremation. We welcomed **Rachel Essig** as the Executive Director in 2018.

Rachel continues to promote natural burial and is working on several master plans for the cemetery. One section will be exclusively for natural burials along with other sections that are a hybrid of conventional and natural burials. She has added several cremation choices for our members, including the new Stephens Creek Trail and overlook for placement and memorialization of cremated remains.

Two of our long-time board members have recently retired. **Fritz Delbrueck** was first elected to the board in 1999 and served as President from 2006-2008. **Steve Chown** was first elected in 2006 and served as President from 2012-2014. The River View Cemetery Association Board of Trustees thanks them for their service. Their

dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment significantly contributed to the health and growth of the cemetery.

The Trustees welcome **Mary Faulkner** to the cemetery board and **Nicole Lewis** and **Christopher Griffin** to the funeral home board. Mary is a marketing executive in the investment industry who is active with the Oregon Historical Society, PSU Friends of History, PSU Center for Women's Leadership, and Lone Fir Cemetery Foundation. Nicole is a regional planner with master's degrees in urban planning and natural resources policy, with a passion for reading, learning, and exploration. Her family includes former Trustee Cicero H. Lewis and many generations of association members. Christopher is a physician with additional degrees in law and business whose family also includes four generations of association members. He has been active leading historical tours of the cemetery. The new board members are all eager to get started.



Stay tuned for updates via our newsletters, websites, Facebook, and Instagram (@riverviewcemetery).

Thank you,

Charles Bishop  
President, River View Cemetery Association Board of Trustees

### In this issue:

Meet the Executive Director  
Landscape Architect's View  
New Development

Rules of the Road  
Legacy Staff Transitions  
Our Buried History

Lunch & Learn Series  
First Annual Scatter Day

## MEET RACHEL ESSIG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I joined River View Cemetery in July of 2018 and walked into some big projects: mitigating landslides, finishing the Sellwood Bridge project, assisting with employee transitions, and addressing the barriers to opening River View's natural burial section.



### A bit about me

I have an unexpected career as a cemetery operator that began in 2008 at Metro Regional Government where I was responsible for 14 historic cemeteries. Previously, I worked for Metro on habitat protection and was a part of the team that worked to acquire and protect 17,000 acres of parks, trails, and natural areas across the Portland region. After five years managing Metro's cemetery program, I transitioned to the corporate world and led Skyline Memorial Gardens & Funeral Home in northwest Portland from 2013-2018. And now, I am thrilled to be Executive Director of one of Portland's most iconic cemeteries because it marries three things I find important: service, tranquil places, and community.

I love having a career in the funeral and cemetery industry. Being able to provide a place for quiet reflection but also serving everyone regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic condition are values that drive me as a leader. Through my experiences as a public employee, a private business manager, a volunteer, and a non-profit and trade association leader, I have always been known as a subject matter expert in finding innovative ways to connect the community to serene places. It is my hope that I can do the same at River View.

Read on in this newsletter about our first ever "Scatter Day." We developed a trail within River View specifically for cremation and where annually we invite the public to scatter their loved ones' cremated remains for free. (An appointment is necessary

to fill out authorization paperwork.) We record their loved one's names in our records for future generations to discover. This free service is offered to those who have struggled to make placement of their loved ones' cremated remains or where they intended to scatter but were unsure of how to go about it. It is our pleasure to relieve this burden once a year.

### Looking forward

As you'll read in this newsletter, there is a lot coming our way in the next few years, perhaps most importantly, opening the south slope of the cemetery. We have retained Walker Macy and CPRA Studios on the design for our new "conventional" burial area, cremation courtyard, and Natural Burial Meadow and terrace. Both landscape architecture firms are working together to employ simplicity in design to capture the magnificent vistas from the south slope of our cemetery. We encourage you to sign up for our "Lunch and Learn" for more information about the design, natural funeral and burial choices in either section, and to learn more about how to get involved in the finalization of the design effort for fall of 2022.

With thanks for your interest and support,

Rachel Essig  
Executive Director

## A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S VIEW

Chelsea McCann, Principal  
Walker Macy



As landscape architects, we are trained in the history of the profession and the origins of public open spaces. Early in our education, we learn about the role of cemeteries as some of the first public parks, and how they brought communities together to walk, picnic, and gather together on grassy lawns under large spreading shade trees. River View Cemetery is a beautiful example of this style of design, with a setting that beckons strolls through the grounds and that rewards visitors with views overlooking the Willamette River and Mt. Hood. River View, however, is more than a beautiful park-like cemetery; it has been an important landmark within our city since its establishment in 1882, as the resting place for many of Portland's founding families, as well as notable people who shaped our community and our state. I was born and raised in southwest Portland, and as I walk through the beautiful grounds, I see familiar names that feel like a record of the city's history and development over time.

I've been working as a landscape architect for over twenty years and have spent the majority of my career focused on designing and developing public urban open spaces. These are parks, riverfronts, and plazas that are meant to serve everyone in the community. They are designed to be durable and flexible in order to support any number of events or activities that people imagine. I am grateful for the projects I have been able to work on, but developing multi-use spaces that need to be "everything for everyone" can be an exhausting challenge. Cemeteries, by contrast, offer a more definitive set of parameters for design and public use. I feel fortunate for the opportunities I have had designing them, and when I work on teams to design these places of rest, I am able to find a bit of respite for myself, focusing on how to make places that are beautiful and peaceful for those that visit. My cemetery projects have mainly focused on veterans' cemeteries, including Willamette National Cemetery, Los Angeles National Cemetery, and a number of veterans' cemeteries in Arizona and Oregon. When the opportunity came up to work at River View, I was absolutely thrilled. This was a chance to work on a significant public cemetery in my own city, helping them to continue serving my community for years to come.

The project we are developing at River View will be varied: it encompasses numerous corners of the property and addresses all sorts of burial needs—some of them immediate, others more long term. Within these needs is a significant focus on supporting natural burial that gives us an opportunity to reimagine what a cemetery should be like when the focus of the burial area is centered on sustainability and stewardship. We have been spending time imagining how the grounds may be treated and how the space may be different from the historic and traditional portions of River View.

We are inspired by the elegance and distinctly Northwestern character of the oldest parts of the cemetery: how the use of natural stone is broken up and balanced by mature trees; how the burial areas are often oriented toward the views of the river and the mountain as they curve along the contours of the rolling hillside. We hope to reintroduce some of these qualities through the materials and details that we are creating in newer sections of the cemetery, to underscore for future generations what makes River View uniquely Portland and special. Through all of this, and most importantly, we are focusing on the experience for visitors. We want to think about how each area will feel for friends and family when they visit the cemetery, creating a peaceful, contemplative space for everyone to enjoy.

While we are still early in the process, working on this project has been a great honor, and as fascinating as I'd hoped. The team at

River View is a pleasure to work with, and we look forward to continuing to get to know the place, the River View staff, and the community members who cherish it as we continue to support the Cemetery in its evolution.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all area users of our rules. While River View offers a quiet place to connect with nature, we need you to help us keep it tranquil. **When walking or biking in our cemetery, please remember the following:**

- Move to the edge of the road for funeral processions – usually led by a white van.
- Respect mourners and workers. Keep voices low and don't touch grave markers.
- When biking, stay on designated bike routes and stop at all intersections. No training and keep to 15 MPH.
- For safety, no headphones, please.
- No roller blades, hover boards, e-scooters, scooters, roller skates or skateboards – our cemetery is open to bikes, vehicles, and pedestrians only.
- No pets - trained service dogs are welcome.

## MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND BICYCLIST CLOSURE

As we head into Memorial Day, please remember that River View will be closed to bicyclists from May 29-31 to allow families to visit graves and mourn in peace.

Thanks for helping us keep River View safe and peaceful for all.





### **NEW DEVELOPMENT SKETCH**

We have retained Walker Macy and CPRA Studios for the design of our new "conventional" burial area, cremation courtyard, and Natural Burial Meadow and terrace. Both landscape architecture firms are working together to employ simplicity in design to capture the magnificent vistas from the south slope of our cemetery. We encourage you to sign up for our "Lunch and Learn" for more information about the design, natural funeral and burial choices in either section (see page 7).



This section features expansive vistas of Mt. Hood and is split by a seasonal streambed that channels stormwater. South of this split is "Hood View," a traditional area where both vaulted burial and natural burial occur together, as in the rest of the cemetery. "Oaks Court", dedicated to memorializing cremated remains, is the circular structure on the left. North of the streambed is "The Meadow", our new dedicated natural burial section, slated to open in 2022. This terraced area will have a meadow-like feel and limited headstones. Curved pathways will lead to "The Terrace" which will provide cremation memorialization and seating for reflection. The octagonal image to the far right is a park-like shelter that will be used for graveside and funeral services. The linear lines are pathways for entry into the area and equipment access.

## LEGACY STAFF TRANSITIONS

Our heartfelt goodbyes to exceptional River View employees: **David Noble**, Executive Director 2004-2018, who put River View on Portland's map for environmentally-friendly choices in burial and cremation. **Steven Moore**, Funeral Home Manager, is now semi-retired but still works with us on a part-time basis. Together with David, Steve has helped create exceptional programming and service for our natural funeral and burial clients. **Christina (Chris) Westin**, Funeral Director, began at River View just shortly after the funeral home opened and served our families well for 15 years. She took to funeral service after her father Joe Westin who operated Wilhelm's Portland Memorial for a number of years. Chris has moved on to another career. Her bright smile and attitude are missed. **Jocelyn Bagley**, Family Service Advisor, moved to San Diego in 2020, though she has since returned to the Pacific Northwest. So many families enjoyed working with Jocelyn and we are thankful for her service. **Julie "Burt" Hendrix** retired late 2019. Many of you know her from helping with genealogy, hosting receptions, greeting you at the mausoleum, and over Memorial Day weekend, helping at the Palatine gate. **Ramiro Sanchez**, our mausoleum attendant, retired in May 2020 and will be sorely missed for his dry sense of humor and reverent service to our families. **Jessica Repp** has decided to take on a career in the mortgage industry. Many of you know her from the Easter Sunrise Service, our December Holiday event, and the annual National Children's Memorial Day Candlelighting Service. She has helped organize many open houses and symposiums through the years. Her dedication to River View and the families we served is greatly appreciated.

There are many new faces when you come visit, along with many familiar, but in the end, River View is here to provide you and your family stable, warm, and kind service.

## OUR BURIED HISTORY

### Hazel Ying Lee Louie

By Peri Muhich

Hazel Ying Lee Louie was the first Chinese American woman to earn a pilot's license and fly for the United States military in the Woman Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). Born August 24, 1912, in Portland, Oregon, she was one of eight children born to Yuet Lee and Ssiu La Wong, first-generation Chinese Americans who had immigrated to Portland from Taishan, Guangdong. The family owned a Chinese restaurant in Old Town Chinatown.

Hazel attended Commerce High School (now Cleveland High School) where she was involved in swimming and handball and

as a teenager, learned to drive. Following graduation from high school in 1929, Hazel found a job as an elevator operator at Liebes Department Store in downtown Portland. This was one of the few jobs a Chinese American woman could hold at this time. At an early age Hazel realized that she wanted to learn to fly. In 1931 Hazel took her first airplane ride at an air show. She soon joined the Chinese Flying Club of Portland and took flying lessons with aviator Al Greenwood. In October of 1932, Hazel Ying Lee became one of the first Chinese American women to earn a pilot's license.

Hazel went to China in 1933 with the goal of joining the Chinese Air Force. Although they were in need of pilots, the Chinese Air Force would not accept a woman pilot. Instead, Hazel spent the next several years flying for a private airline. Hazel returned to the USA in 1938 where in New York, she worked for the Chinese government buying war materials for China.



On Oct 7, 1943 Hazel married fellow pilot "Clifford" Yim-qun Louie in Manhattan, New York. He too had received his pilot's license at the Portland Flying School and has gone to China in 1933 when Hazel did. He returned to the United States in the fall of 1942.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, the Americans were drawn into WWII and it became clear that there were not enough pilots to sustain the war effort. In 1943 the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) was created. Experienced pilots like Hazel were eager to join. She was accepted into the 4th class and became the first Chinese American to fly for the United States military. During her training it was reported that she fell from an aircraft she was riding in when the instructor unexpectedly made a loop. Her seat belt was not fastened correctly. She saved herself by using her parachute. Hazel landed in a field and walked back to the base dragging her parachute behind her.

Hazel was assigned to the Third Ferrying Group where they delivered aircraft, which were being manufactured in converted automobile factories in Michigan, to points of embarkation, where the planes were then shipped to the European and Pacific War fronts.

Hazel was a favorite with her fellow pilots and was said to have a great sense of humor and known to be a bit mischievous. She often used her lipstick to inscribe Chinese characters on the tail of her plane and planes of fellow pilots.

In September of 1944 Hazel received orders sending her to the Bell Aircraft factory in Niagara Falls to pick up and deliver a P-63 plane to Great Falls, Montana. Great Falls was the link in supplying the Russian allies with planes. The male pilots flew the planes to Alaska where Russian pilots waited to fly the planes home. Bad weather delayed her mission at Fargo, North Dakota. When the weather cleared on the morning of November 23 (Thanksgiving Day), Hazel left North Dakota. Shortly after 2 p.m. she was cleared to land at Great Falls. A large number of P-63s were approaching the airport at the same time which caused a confusion on the part of the airport control tower. This resulted in Hazel's plane colliding with another P-63. Both aircraft were engulfed in flames. Hazel was pulled from her burning wreckage with her flight jacket still smoldering. Two days later, November 25, 1944, Hazel died from the severe burns she received in the crash. She was 32 years old.

Three days after Hazel's death, her parents were informed by telegram that their son, who was serving with the U.S. Tank Corps, had also died in combat. He had been serving in France.

Although the women pilots flew under military command, they were classified as civilians and were paid through the civil service. They received no military benefits and if they died in the line of duty, no military funeral was allowed. Hazel Lee was laid to rest in River View Cemetery and is buried next to her brother, Victor, on a sloping hill in River View Cemetery overlooking the Willamette River.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a law recognizing Women Airforce Service Pilots and their veteran status was granted. Thirty-eight WASP pilots died while in service during WWII. Lee was the last to die. In 2004, Hazel Ying Lee was inducted into Oregon's Aviation Hall of Honor. President Barack Obama awarded Hazel and all other WASPs, living, deceased, or killed during WWII, the Congressional Gold Medal in 2010. PBS produced a documentary in 2010 about Hazel entitled, "A Brief Flight: Hazel Ying Lee and the Women Who Flew Pursuit".



Learn about natural burial, Aqua Cremation, and our development plans at River View Cemetery via our free virtual Lunch & Learn event June 3 from Noon to 1 pm and/or June 5 from 11 am to Noon.

Nearly a third of River View's burial clients already choose natural burial, available throughout our beautiful historic cemetery. Others select Aqua Cremation, an environmentally-friendly alternative to flame cremation and conventional burial.

You are invited to join us online to learn about the range of eco-friendly options available at River View. Ask our funeral directors all of your questions and get a preview of the plans for our new Natural Burial Meadow from our landscape architect. River View Cemetery was established in 1882 and is Portland's oldest endowment care cemetery.

Go to our Events page at [www.RiverViewCemetery.org](http://www.RiverViewCemetery.org) to learn more and register. You will receive the Zoom webinar login information via email prior to the event.



River View Cemetery Funeral Home on Facebook  
@RiverViewCemetery on Instagram



*Design and photography by Anna Mehrer*

# FIRST ANNUAL *Scatter Day*

April 24, 2021



We would like to extend a great big thank-you to our families and staff who participated in our first annual Scatter Day on April 24, 2021. We are grateful to the families who have entrusted us with their loved ones. Gratitude also to: Life Cycle Celebrant, Holly Pruett, and her compassionate support in providing just the right words when it is difficult to find them; Chris, our groundskeeper, who diligently mulched and raked between scatterings for a dignified and environmentally-conscious placement; Avalon Florist for the gorgeous floral arrangement; Michelle from the band JULIE for the beautiful acoustic guitar music; Melinda Sandifer with Miss'ipi Chef for her fabulous chili and cornbread for comfort on a rainy day. We look forward to next year's Scatter Day!