

**Departure: James Royden Ley, Life Member  
June 20, 1943 – September 25, 2020**

- Helen Punches

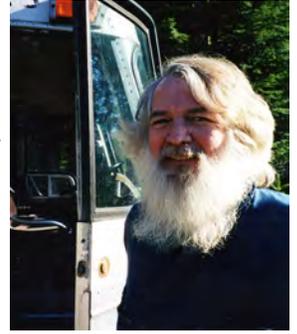
Jim was the third child and only son of George Ley and Frances Brown Ley. Born in Ross, Marin County, he spent most of his childhood on a small ranch near Lakeport, with horses. His teen years were spent in Davis, where he graduated from high school in 1961. No horses in Davis, but there were trains! Jim's favorite thing!

After a couple of years at Sacramento City College studying aircraft mechanics, he went to work for the Southern Pacific as a telegrapher at the Davis depot. In 1966, he bid on and got the job of night drawbridge tender on the Martinez-Benicia railroad bridge. In 1968, he worked in San Francisco dispatching ships for the San Francisco Marine Exchange. At the same time, he worked as chief radio engineer at the underground station, KMPX, often filling in as disc jockey. This job led to the next one, as a radio transmitter engineer, which involved the construction and maintenance of AM and FM stations. In 1972, he was recruited by ABC Radio in Los Angeles as a station engineer. In LA he romanced the daughter of a famous Hollywood personality, which led to social encounters with a lot of other famous people. But ABC wanted to transfer him to New York. He didn't like LA and was pretty sure he wouldn't like New York, so he came back to San Francisco and the transmitter engineering job.

In San Francisco, he met Catherine Grubb and together they moved to Lake County, a few miles from where he grew up. Here they acquired some horses, and from this time on, wherever Jim lived, there was always a horse or two in the picture. They owned and operated a natural food store in Lakeport for four years, then moved to Callahan, in the Trinity Mountains, and Jim worked at a small radio station in Yreka. Their son Frank was born in Medford in July, 1980.

The marriage didn't last, and Jim was back to San Francisco and the transmitters for a while, then back to Davis, where he worked as a contract electrician and volunteered as a docent

at the California State Railroad Museum. When he heard about a new railroad museum in Portola, he went up to check it out and ended up living there in an old outfit car from 1984 until 1988, fulfilling his childhood dream of playing choo-choo. This experience led him to a brief job as electrician on a party train that ran from San Jose to Reno. He loved the job, but the company went broke and he was back in Davis.



At this point his mother, Frances, had bought a small ranch and wanted Jim to live with her and help her manage it. Of course there were horses. Jim went to work as a bus driver for Yolobus, a commuter line between Sacramento and Woodland. He did that for several years until he was offered a job as locomotive engineer with Yolo Shortline. His dream job! He ran that engine for the shortline until 2001 when Frances' health dictated that they move (with one horse) closer to his oldest sister in western Washington.

At the little ranch that Frances bought in Kitsap County, Jim undertook to convert an old transit bus to a motor home. Frances passed away in 2004 and Jim took his horse to his niece in Oregon and lived a mobile life in his bus for a couple of years. Then he bought a piece of land in the backwoods of Kitsap County, where he lived off-the-grid in his bus and built himself a self-contained electrical system. He lived there for six or seven years, until his health became questionable, at which time he and his lovely lab moved in with his sister and brother-in-law. And there he stayed for seven years until his passing in September.

Jim was a long-time member of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus.

Jim never worried much about security, or planning for the future. He took life as it came, and he had one heck of an interesting life. In railroad-speak, he has now "Caught the Westbound," and we miss him.