

**SOUTHERN PACIFIC NEWSLETTER**  
**Edited by Bill Fowler**  
**October 2021**



**Thomas Jack Hannigan Jr.**

Thomas Jack Hannigan Jr. passed away peacefully in his Eugene, Oregon home

on the morning of August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. His wife of 57 years, Linda, held his hand while reading the newspaper as they enjoyed doing every morning. Jack spent his last days at home surrounded by their four daughters Tammy, Tanya, Tara, and Trina; twelve grandchildren; seventeen great grandchildren; and many other family members and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, his baby sister Wendy and his younger brother Steve, all of whom he missed terribly.

After 4 years in the United States Marine Corps "TJ," as he was called by fellow co-workers, found work at Southern Pacific. He enjoyed advancing through various positions and many friendships made during his nearly 30 years with the Company, retiring not long after Southern Pacific's merger with Union Pacific. In retirement, he and Linda took to the road in a trailer visiting every state in the lower 48. Jack and Linda had an amazing talent and knack for gardening. It was quite common for them to drop by for visits with large amounts of produce, fruit, and fresh eggs. Jack had a great passion for history which led to his interest and efforts in genealogy.

Jack was a man filled with integrity, good nature, and honesty. He was a truly hard-working man. He could always be counted on for solid advice and counsel and will be missed

**Jack**

by many for the emptiness left by the absence of his wisdom and company. We will always cherish his ability to tell stories, his quick wit, and his infectious laughter. He loved his family with all his might and then some. Jack leaves us with so many wonderful memories to treasure and will always be in our hearts.

His family wants to express deep gratitude to the doctors, nurses, CNAs, therapists, care managers, and the hospice nurses at PeaceHealth Riverbend who cared for him the past few years, and especially his last stay in ICU. Your ability to rise above the chaos and struggles of nursing during a pandemic and still show compassion while giving excellent care to our father, husband, grandpa, and friend is so very much appreciated. You altogether are the reason he was able to come home allowing us the opportunity to say our goodbyes. Thank you and God Bless each and every one of you!

Editor's request: When changing email addresses, please send your new address to [billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org](mailto:billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org).



**Jessie Elwood Hollis**  
**July 23, 1945 ~ September 6, 2021**

Jessie Elwood Hollis, 76, of Terre Haute, Indiana, passed away September 6, 2021. He was born in Houston, Texas to James "Red" L. Hollis and Lillian L. (Kellum) Hollis on July 23, 1945.

Jessie served in the United States Army. He held membership with the American Legion. Jessie worked for 40 years for Southern Pacific/Union Pacific. While employed by Southern Pacific, he worked in various clerical positions in Lufkin, Nacogdoches, and in the general office building in Houston, and while with Union Pacific, he had similar duties at Strang and the intermodal facility at the Englewood Yard, when he retired in 2008.

He enjoyed gardening, lawn work, canning vegetables and fruit that he harvested, and bluegrass music. Most of all Jessie loved all his family, and spending time with them.

He is survived by his wife of 15 years, Catherine "Cathy" (Kidwell-Pickett) Hollis; children Tony Willis, Frank Shafer Jr., Jessie E. Hollis Jr. (Julie), Anthony D. Hollis (Waynette), and Starla Brown (Chuck Riggs); twenty-one grandchildren; forty-eight great-grandchildren and one on the way; and brothers Douglas D. Hollis (Beverly) and Wayne Hollis (Janice). Jessie was preceded in death by his parents; sisters, Shirley Reid, Nelda Burton, and Eloise "Pickles" Richardson; brother, Jamie Hollis; and brother-in-law, Floyd "Hooter" Reid. He was very proud to have found ancestors in the Hocker Cemetery in Parke County, Indiana and others in Sullivan, Mississippi.



*Courtesy of the Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society.*

SP 4000 and 4001, shown above in Colfax, California in 1910, were the first of seventeen 2-8-8-2 MC-1 locomotives ordered by Southern Pacific specifically for use on the route through the Donner Pass. They were put in service in

1909 from Sacramento to Reno, but the smoke and gas they created in Donner's tunnels and sheds were more than crews could tolerate. After several experiments and discussions, the idea of putting the cab in front was chosen. The remaining order was quickly modified to MC-2 and the first cab-forwards were delivered later that year. The SP 4000 was converted to a cab-forward class MC-2 in 1928.



### **Douglas Walter Champion**

Douglas Walter Champion passed away peacefully at his home on September 9, 2021, surrounded by his loving family. Doug was born February 6, 1934 in Ogden, Utah and was raised by his father Walter and grandparents Thomas and Bessie Champion.

Doug attended Ogden high School where he excelled in basketball and baseball. In 1957, he married the love of his life, Tamra, and they spent sixty-four wonderful years together. During that time, they raised three children, Jill (Rich) LaFeber, Bret (Carrie) Champion, and Julie (Kent) Argyle.

Doug loved the outdoors and enjoyed camping, fishing and hunting with his wife, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and his many, many friends. He also enjoyed traveling with his wife to Mexico, Arizona, San Diego, Yellowstone, and many other places. He was employed by the Southern Pacific where he retired at the young age of 55.

Doug had a sense of humor that was loved by all. He could catch a fish in a puddle if he tried and he loved his family deeply. He will be missed by everyone that knew him.

Doug is survived by his wife, three children, seven grandchildren, eight great grandchildren, and a step-brother. He was preceded in death by his father, step-mother, sister, and grandparents.



**David May**  
**August 5, 1942 ~ September 9, 2021**

David May, 79, a resident of Lordsburg, New Mexico passed away on September 9, 2021 in Las Cruces, New Mexico. He was born August 5, 1942 in Spencer, Indiana to Myron May and Oneita Timmons. Mr. May proudly served his country with the United States Army.

He is survived by his wife, Lucy May of the family home; his mother, Oneita May; four sons, David May Jr. of Carlsbad, New Mexico, Scott May and wife Shelly of Las Cruces, Michael May of Las Cruces, and Justin May of Lordsburg; four daughters, Carrie Strain and husband Ben of Lordsburg, Frances De La Garza and husband Arthur of Las Cruces, Serena Brito and husband Enrique of Lordsburg, and Mariah May; twenty three grandchildren; twelve great grandchildren; two brothers, Myron Lee May and wife Maureen of Florida; Roger May of Indianapolis, Indiana; two sisters, Diana Lovern and husband Larry of Indianapolis; and Sheila Valainis and husband Tony of Indianapolis. He was preceded in death by his father.

Editor's note: Jon Hurst advises, "Retired SP/UP conductor Dave May hired out in May of 1971 and worked a variety of locations, ending his career in Lordsburg, New Mexico."

**Annual Old Rails Dinner**  
**Smith's Landing foot of L Street, Antioch, California**  
**Noon, Sunday October 17<sup>th</sup> 2021**

A return to our annual dinner will take place at Smith's Landing Restaurant and Grill. We'll be gathering for a meet and greet at noon while enjoying plates of hors d'oeuvres, free non-alcoholic beverages, and a cash only no-host bar. Dinner will be served at 1:00 pm starting with salad or soup, an entrée, and dessert. We are honoring our widowed community and all widows will eat free! For all others the dinner will be \$40.00 which includes tax and gratuity.

We will start with a salad of strawberries, arcadian field greens, crumbled goat cheese, candied pecans, crisp prosciutto and brown sugar balsamic vinaigrette, or New England-style clam chowder with clams, potatoes and bacon.

You will pick an entrée from:

**Salmon Provençal:** a pan seared then oven roasted Canadian King Salmon topped with sun dried tomato pesto cream served with au gratin potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

**Rib Eye Steak:** a 12-ounce rib eye simply grilled with a zesty house seasoning mix, topped with bleu cheese compound butter and a side of veal demi-glaze and au gratin potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

**Parmesan Crusted Pork Chop** (the other white meat): a double cut bone-in Duroc pork chop crusted with Italian spices, Parmesan cheese and Panko breading, flash-fried and oven roasted, and served in a pool of roasted garlic Asiago cream sauce includes au gratin potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

**Eggplant Parmesan:** fresh eggplant breaded with Italian breadcrumbs with a blend of Parmesan and Mozzarella cheeses and topped with marinara sauce and garnished with fresh Parmesan.

Dessert will consist of **Chocolate Decadence:** a dense chocolate flourless cake with raspberry sauce.

If you are not satisfied, I will be armed with coupons for Kentucky Fried Chicken!

Note: The no-host bar is a cash only bar. No credit cards or checks.

To reserve your place, send a check for \$40.00 per plate (except widows) made out to "Old Rails Club" and mail to: Bob Paulson, 2969 Putnam Blvd., Pleasant Hill, CA 94523-4969. Please include a note with your choice of soup or salad and entrée and note the wellness if you

select the steak as R, MR, M, MW, or W for rare, medium rare, medium, medium well, and well done.

Additionally, there is an Amtrak "Depot" about one hundred yards east of the Marina where the restaurant is located.

Call any widows with whom you are in contact and invite them to join us. The Old Rails Club is earnest about making our widows welcome at our functions, including our monthly luncheon and breakfast. I would appreciate the telephone number of all widows so we can offer a personal invitation.

Bad Order Bob Paulson S/T Old Rails Club

925-935-5527

[Badorderbob4@gmail.com](mailto:Badorderbob4@gmail.com)

**Bob Paulson is accepting reservations for the event until October 10, 2021.**

Southern Pacific retiree groups are again meeting for breakfast and lunch, and in recognition of these events, the Calendar page on the Southern Pacific Journey website is being updated as information is received. If your organization should be included, please advise Bill Fowler at [billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org](mailto:billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org).

**Wanted: Oral histories of former Southern Pacific System employees. If you wish to contribute, please contact Bill Fowler at [billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org](mailto:billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org).**

At the monthly luncheon meeting of retired Southern Pacific employees in San Antonio on September 7, 2021, the following pictures were taken, and furnished courtesy of Stuart Schroeder.



*Retired clerk Robert Brysch (l) and retired conductor David "Whiteshoes" Johnson.*



*Retired locomotive engineer Robert Oefinger.*



*Retired train dispatcher Stuart Schroeder and retired conductor Charles "Oggie" Ogburn.*



**Ronald Leroy Meier**  
**April 18, 1929 ~ September 13, 2021**

Ronald Leroy Meier passed away in Tracy, California, on September 13, 2021. He was born in Venango, Nebraska on April 18, 1929.

Ron grew up in Hastings Nebraska. In his youth he competed in roller skating derbies. Ron's family moved to California during World War II. He enlisted in the Marines and the Air Force as an automotive mechanic. He retired from the Southern Pacific in 1989. At age 22 he met the love of his life Mary Lou Cook. They were married in Waco Texas in 1952 and relocated to Fairfield, California. Family, camping vacations, hunting, and automotive vehicles were some of Ron's passions, particularly, Chevy pickup trucks. He was well respected by his colleagues and was very involved with the UTU for many years. He even managed to donate over thirty gallons of blood to the Delta blood bank.

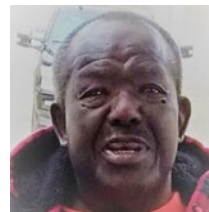
Ron and Mary raised three sons and one daughter: Joe Alan Meier and Ronald Eugene Meier were born in Fairfield and Paula Jeanne Meier Nelson and John Kevin Meier were born in Tracy. In addition, Ron had four grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. He was a devoted Lutheran and a big family man. Ron will be greatly missed, but always be remembered and celebrated in our hearts.

**Lois Elaine Sorensen**  
**October 21, 1948 ~ July 2, 2020**

Lois Elaine Sorensen passed away at her home in Eugene, Oregon on July 2, 2020 at age 71. She was preceded in death by her parents, Sylvester Powell and Alma Schultz Powell, brothers Richard Powell and Jerry Powell. Lois is survived by her loving husband David and sisters Charlotte Y. Bates and Wanda Swift. She is survived by her nieces Karen Hansen and Suzi Kiser and nephews Gary Powell, Jay Powell, Robert Powell, James Bates, Dean Bates, Dale Swift, and Brian Swift.

Lois was born in Deer River, Minnesota and moved with her family to Looking Glass, Oregon in 1950 where her father secured employment in the lumber industry. Lois went to schools in Looking Glass and graduated from high school in 1966 at Douglass High School. She then went to Business School in Portland and graduated in 1967, and secured employment with Southern Pacific in Eugene the same year. Lois retired in 1997 after 30 years of service.

Lois and David were married in 1973 and enjoyed 47 years of marriage. David was transferred to California in 1975 and during their lives, they lived in Roseville, California; San Francisco; back to Eugene in 1980; and then to Roseville in 1989. David retired in 1997 and they returned to Oregon in 2000, living in Florence and finally moving to Eugene in 2006 because of failing health. Lois volunteered in Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Roseville and did social work as a home health provider while living in Florence. Lois and David did volunteer work at Saint Peter Catholic Church in Eugene, where they were both members.



**Oliver Kay County**  
**October 1, 1942 ~ September 15, 2021**

Oliver Kay County was born in Pearsall, Texas, on October 1, 1942 to Roosevelt County, Sr and Lois Lorraine Reed in Pearsall, Texas.

Oliver married Augustina Laverne Ross in May of 1969 and settled in San Antonio. Although he never completed formal education, he was able to provide well for his family. Oliver had a long and successful career with Southern Pacific. In his position as foreman, he was well respected. He was known to be tough, but fair. He always fought to ensure that those under him were treated well and had access to all opportunities for advancement.

In February of 2016, Oliver had a fall where he sustained a spinal cord injury. This injury left him severely disabled. As a result, his health deteriorated. Despite the overwhelming

obstacles, Oliver fought to the end. He was confident in the Bible's hope of a resurrection.

Oliver was preceded in death by his father, Roosevelt County, Sr; his mother, Lois Lorraine Reed; his twin sister, Opal Mae Mayo; his sister, Frances L. Johnson and his brothers: Leslie Reed County and Billy Joe Cooper.

Oliver is survived by his brother, Roosevelt County, Jr; his daughters: Margaret Ann Escalera, Leslie Yvonne County of San Antonio, Olivia Denise County-Williams, and Dawnyce; grandchildren, nieces, nephews, other son. Oliver always wanted a son. He found him in his grandson Kursten County.



**Russell Ray Elley**  
**February 2, 1958 ~ September 19, 2021**

Russell Ray Elley, age 63 of Seguin, Texas passed away at his home on September 19, 2021, surrounded by his loving family. Russell was born on February 2, 1958 in Seguin, the oldest of three children born to Myrtle (Wilke) Elley and Gussie Elley.

He spent a large part of his youth at the family farm in Clear Springs, Texas helping his parents and grandparents with their farm. Russell graduated from McCollum High School in San Antonio, in 1976. He attended San Antonio College for a year before joining Southern Pacific in 1977. He was a proud member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He represented employees of Union Pacific after Southern Pacific and the Union Pacific merged. He served as a local chairman, legislative representative and Delegate and held multiple vice general chairman positions. He was extremely proud of the work he did for the National Transportation Safety Board as a union representative incident investigator. He also worked tirelessly on behalf of the Operation Redblock program in the San Antonio service unit. He eventually took over the farming from his parents until he sold it

shortly before he retired with 41 years Southern Pacific/Union Pacific service.

During high school in San Antonio, he met the love of his life, Alissa Scales. They were married June 24, 1977 and recently celebrated forty-four years of marriage. Their daughter, Kreschendalyn, was born in 1980, followed by daughter, Victoria, in 1984, and daughter Margaret in 1991. He was delighted with the birth of his grandson Cash in 2010.

Russell was a dedicated and loyal family man and loved his family with all his heart and soul. He loved helping his children with their FFA projects and helping out with various organizations at Navarro ISD. He also loved serving the Lord and served in many capacities at both Grace Lutheran Church in Seguin and Cross Lutheran Church in New Braunfels.

Russell is preceded in death by his parents, Myrtle and Gussie Elley; his mother and father-in-law, Olga and Howard Scales Jr.; brother-in-law Stephen Lynch and nephew Ryan Lynch.

He is lovingly remembered by his wife, Alissa; children Kreschendalyn Backus and husband Ranchard, Victoria Elley and fiancée Joshua Jones, and Margaret Elley; grandchildren Cash Backus, Claire Backus, and Isabel Jones; sister, Gay Riedel and husband Gerald; brother Ronald Elley; sisters-in-law, Sally Patten and husband Pat and Margaret Lynch; brothers-in-law, Howard Scales and wife Janet, Steven Scales and wife Debbie; nieces, Lezlie Walden, Michelle Scales, Kristyn Lynch, Stephanie Gregory, Caeleigh Riedel, nephews, Howard Walden, Christopher Walden and wife Stephanie, Shawn Scales, and wife Alena, Ronnie Joe Elley and wife Missy, Colton Riedel, Michael Elley and wife Zan, Cory Riedel; Aunt, Frances Tschoepe; cousins, other family members and friends.