

= Jack Ely =

Jack Brown Ely ( September 11 , 1943 ? April 28 , 2015 ) was an American guitarist and singer , best known for singing the Kingsmen 's version of " Louie Louie " . Classically trained in piano , he began playing guitar after seeing Elvis Presley on television . In 1959 , he co -@-@ founded the Kingsmen and with them recorded " Louie Louie " in 1963 ; Ely 's famously incoherent vocals were partly the result of his braces and the rudimentary recording method . Before the record became a hit Ely was forced out of the group and began playing with his new band , the Courtmen . Ely died in Terrebonne , Oregon , on April 28 , 2015 at age 71 .

= = Early life = =

Jack Ely was born on September 11 , 1943 in Portland , Oregon , near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers . Both of his parents were music majors at the University of Oregon , and his father , Ken Ely , was a singer . His father died when he was four years old and his mother subsequently remarried .

Ely began playing piano while still a young child , and was performing recitals all over the Portland area before his seventh birthday . When he was eleven , a piano teacher provided what he termed " jazz improvisation lessons . " The teacher would show Ely a section of a classical composition , and the boy would have to make up 15 similar pieces . He would be required to share each in class and then make up one on the spot .

On January 28 , 1956 , Ely watched Elvis Presley on television for the first time , and he decided that he wanted to play guitar . At his first guitar lesson , he was required to play " Mary Had a Little Lamb " , an experience that Ely found so demeaning that he quit after that lesson and began picking out his favorite guitar riffs by ear . Ely played guitar and sang for the Young Oregonians , a travelling vaudeville show for entertainers under the age of 18 . " We didn 't get paid in money , we got paid in experience , " Ely recalled .

= = The Kingsmen = =

Ely was enrolled at Washington High School in Portland , Oregon . He did not play in the school band , but had a passion for singing . In 1959 , Lynn Easton 's mother invited him to play at a Portland hotel gig , with Ely singing and playing guitar with the backup band and Easton on the drum kit . The two teenagers grew up together , as their parents were close friends . Easton and Ely performed at yacht club parties , and soon added Mike Mitchell on guitar and Bob Nordby on bass to round out a band . They called themselves The Kingsmen , taking the name from a recently disbanded group . The Kingsmen began their collective career playing at fashion shows , Red Cross events , and supermarket promotions , generally avoiding rock songs on their setlist . Ely played with the Kingsmen as he attended Portland State University .

In 1962 , while playing a gig at the Pypo Club in Seaside , Oregon , the band noticed Rockin ' Robin Roberts 's version of " Louie Louie " being played on the jukebox for hours on end . The entire club would get up and dance . Ely convinced the Kingsmen to learn the song , which they played at dances to a great crowd response . Unknown to him , he changed the beat from 1 @-@ 2 @-@ 3 @-@ 4 , 1 ? 2 , 1 @-@ 2 @-@ 3 @-@ 4 , 1 ? 2 to 1 @-@ 2 @-@ 3 , 1 ? 2 , 1 @-@ 2 @-@ 3 , 1 ? 2 because he based it on the intro only . Ken Chase , host of radio station KISN , formed his own club to capitalize on these dance crazes . Dubbed " The Chase " , the Kingsmen became the club 's house band and Ken Chase became the band 's manager . Ely was begging Chase to let the band record their own version of " Louie Louie " , and on April 5 , 1963 , Chase booked the band an hour @-@ long session at the local Northwestern Inc. studio for the following day . The band had just played a 90 @-@ minute " Louie Louie " marathon .

Despite the band 's annoyance at having so little time to prepare , the Kingsmen walked into the recording studio on April 6 at 10 : 00 am . In order to sound like a live performance , the group 's equipment was arranged such that Ely was forced to lean back and sing into a boom microphone

suspended high above the floor . " It was more yelling than singing , " Ely said , " ' cause I was trying to be heard over all the instruments . " In addition , he was wearing braces at the time of the performance , further compounding his infamously slurred words . Ely sang the beginning of the third verse a few bars too early , but realized his mistake and waited for the rest of the band to catch up . In what was thought to be a warm @-@ up , the song was recorded in its first and only take . The Kingsmen were not proud of the version , but their manager liked the rawness of their cover . The B @-@ side was " Haunted Castle " , composed by Ely and Don Gallucci , the new keyboardist . However , credit was given to Lynn Easton on both the Jerden and Wand labels . The entire session cost \$ 50 , and the band split the difference .

On August 16 , during a band practice , Easton told Ely that he wanted to abandon the drums and become the frontman and singer . Ely would have to become the drummer , and since The Kingsmen was registered in Easton 's name only , he technically led the band . Ely was not happy with this turn of events , and he and Nordby left the band at once . At the time , the song had sold roughly 600 copies and it was thought that the Kingsmen would disband . When he found out " Louie Louie " was climbing up the Billboard charts , Ely attempted to rejoin the group , but was blocked by Easton who was intent on adding replacements . Undeterred , Ely went on to form his own " Kingsmen " group and also recorded " Love That Louie " in 1964 for RCA Records as Jack E. Lee and the Squires . A legal battle ensued , resulting in Ely ceasing to call his group the Kingsmen and Wand Records being required to credit Ely as lead vocalist on all future " Louie Louie " pressings . Ely received \$ 6000 in royalties , and Easton had to stop lip @-@ synching the song in live performances .

= = Later life and career = =

Ely began touring with his renamed group , the Courtmen . In 1966 , they released " Louie Louie ' 66 " and " Ride Ride Baby " with Bang Records ; neither charted . With the Vietnam War on the horizon , Ely was conscripted into the army , and found his career had waned upon his return to the United States in 1968 . Ely spiraled down into drug and alcohol addiction , but then spoke out against it with the Rockers Against Drugs .

Ely lived at his farm in Terrebonne , Oregon , where he trained horses . He was a strong supporter of the Performance Rights Act , which would give royalties to recording artists and record labels . Since Ely was not the original author , he never received any money from the radio play of " Louie Louie . " In an interview , he said , " It 's not just about me . There are a lot of one @-@ hit wonders out there just like me who deserve compensation when their recorded performances are played and stations get ad revenue from it . "

In 2012 , Ely released a Christian rock album , Love Is All Around You Now .

= = Death = =

Ely died at his Oregon residence on April 28 , 2015 at the age of 71 , having long suffered from an unknown illness . " Because of his religious beliefs , we 're not even sure what it [ the illness ] was , " his son Sean Ely said . He was a Christian Scientist and Sean Ely believed his father suffered from skin cancer .

At the time of his death he was survived by his wife of 16 years , Wendy Maxson Ely , three children , Sean , Sierra and Rob , and two daughters by marriage , Chrystal and Sheri . He was also survived by two sisters , six grandchildren , and two great @-@ grandchildren .

= = Discography = =

= = = Singles = = =

" Louie Louie " / " Haunted Castle " ( Jerden 712 ) 1963 ( as The Kingsmen ) ? regional release

" Louie Louie " / " Haunted Castle " ( Wand 143 ) 1963 ( as The Kingsmen ) ? national release ; " Lead vocal by Jack Ely " on label after 1964 settlement ; B @-@ side changed to " Little Green Thing " on later pressings ; re @-@ released in 1966 as " Louie Louie 64 @-@ 65 @-@ 66 " w / " Haunted Castle " B @-@ side

" Love That Louie " / " Octavepuss " ( RCA 47 @-@ 8452 ) 1964 ( as Jack E. Lee and the Squires )

" Louie Louie ' 66 " / " David 's Mood " ( Bang B @-@ 520 ) 1966 ( as Jack Eely [ sic ] and the Courtmen )

" Ride Ride Baby " / " Louie Go Home " ( Bang B @-@ 534 ) 1966 ( as Jack Ely and the Courtmen )

" Love Is All Around You Now " / " Highway Robbery " ( Roar 201 ) 2012

== = Albums == =

The Kingsman ( Signet 3411 @-@ 56J ) , 1990 ( cassette only )

Love Is All Around You Now ( Mondo Tunes 001 ) , 2012 ( Internet release )

== = Other == =

Ely 's 1976 and 1980 re @-@ recorded versions of " Louie Louie " appeared on multiple " original artist " compilations of 1960s hits as being by " Jack Ely " or " The Kingsmen featuring Jack Ely " .