

= Leo Ryan =

Leo Joseph Ryan , Jr . ( May 5 , 1925 ? November 18 , 1978 ) was an American teacher and politician . He served as a U.S. Representative as a member of the Democratic Party . He represented California 's 11th congressional district from 1973 until he was shot to death in Guyana by members of the Peoples Temple , shortly before the Jonestown mass suicide on November 18 , 1978 , just 11 days after Ryan 's election to a fourth term . He is the only sitting member of the U.S. House of Representatives to have been assassinated in office .

After the Watts Riots of 1965 , Assemblyman Ryan took a job as a substitute school teacher to investigate and document conditions in the area . In 1970 , he investigated the conditions of California prisons by being held , under a pseudonym , as an inmate in Folsom Prison , while presiding as chairman of the Assembly committee that oversaw prison reform . During his time in Congress , Ryan traveled to Newfoundland to investigate the practice of seal hunting .

Ryan was also famous for vocal criticism of the lack of Congressional oversight of the Central Intelligence Agency ( CIA ) , and authored the Hughes ? Ryan Amendment , passed in 1974 . He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal posthumously in 1983 .

= = Early life and education = =

Ryan was born in Lincoln , Nebraska . Throughout his early life , his family moved frequently through Illinois , Florida , New York , Wisconsin , and Massachusetts . He graduated from Campion Jesuit High School in Prairie du Chien , Wisconsin , in 1943 . He then received V @-@ 12 officer training at Bates College and served with the United States Navy from 1943 to 1946 as a submariner .

Ryan graduated from Nebraska 's Creighton University with a B.A. in 1949 and an M.S. in 1951 . He served as a teacher , school administrator and South San Francisco city councilman from 1956 to 1962 . He taught English at Capuchino High School , and chaperoned the marching band in 1961 to Washington , D.C. , to participate in President John F. Kennedy 's inaugural parade . Ryan was inspired by Kennedy 's call to service in his inaugural address , and decided to run for higher office .

= = Career = =

= = = State of California = = =

In 1962 , Ryan was elected mayor of South San Francisco . He served less than a year as mayor , before taking a seat in the California State Assembly 's 27th district , winning his assembly race by a margin of 20 @,@ 000 votes . He had previously run for the State Assembly 's 25th district in 1958 , but lost to Republican Louis Francis . Ryan served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1964 and 1968 , and he held his Assembly seat through 1972 , when he was elected to the United States House of Representatives . He was successively elected three more times to the United States Congress .

U.S. Congresswoman and former California State Senator and Ryan aide Jackie Speier described Ryan 's style of investigation as " experiential legislating " . After the Watts Riots of 1965 , Assemblyman Ryan went to the area and took a job as a substitute school teacher to investigate and document conditions in the area . In 1970 , using a pseudonym , Ryan had himself arrested , detained , and strip searched to investigate conditions in the California prison system . He stayed as an inmate for ten days in the Folsom Prison , while presiding as chairman on the Assembly committee that oversaw prison reform .

As a California Assemblyman , Ryan also served as the Chairman of legislative subcommittee hearings and presided over hearings involving his later successor as Congressman , Tom Lantos . Ryan pushed through important educational policies in California and authored what came to be known as the Ryan Act , which established an independent regulatory commission to monitor

educational credentialing in the state .

= = = United States Congress = = =

During his time in Congress , Ryan went to Newfoundland with James Jeffords to investigate the inhumane killing of seals , and he was famous for vocal criticism of the lack of Congressional oversight of the Central Intelligence Agency ( CIA ) , authoring the Hughes ? Ryan Amendment , which would have required extensive CIA notification of Congress about planned covert operations . Congressman Ryan once told Dick Cheney that leaking a state secret was an appropriate way for a member of Congress to block an " ill @-@ conceived operation " . Ryan supported Patricia Hearst , and along with Senator S. I. Hayakawa , delivered Hearst 's application for a presidential commutation to the Pardon Attorney .

= = Peoples Temple = =

In 1978 , reports regarding widespread abuse and human rights violations in Jonestown among the Peoples Temple , led by cult leader Jim Jones , began to filter out of the organization 's Guyana enclaves . Ryan was friends with the father of former Temple Member Bob Houston , whose mutilated body was found near train tracks on October 5 , 1976 , three days after a taped telephone conversation with Houston 's ex @-@ wife in which leaving the Temple was discussed . Ryan 's interest was further aroused by the custody battle between the leader of a " Concerned Relatives " group , Timothy Stoen , and Jones following a Congressional " white paper " written by Stoen detailing the events . Ryan was one of 91 Congressmen to write Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham on Stoen 's behalf .

Later , after reading an article in the San Francisco Examiner , Ryan declared his intention to go to Jonestown , an agricultural commune in Guyana where Jim Jones and roughly 1 @,@ 000 Temple members resided . Ryan 's choice was also influenced both by the Concerned Relatives group , which consisted primarily of Californians , as were most Temple members , and by his own characteristic distaste for social injustice . According to the San Francisco Chronicle , while investigating the events , the United States Department of State " repeatedly stonewalled Ryan 's attempts to find out what was going on in Jonestown " , and told him that " everything was fine " . The State Department characterized possible action by the United States government in Guyana against Jonestown as creating a potential " legal controversy " , but Ryan at least partially rejected this viewpoint . In a later article in The Chronicle , Ryan was described as having " bucked the local Democratic establishment and the Jimmy Carter administration 's State Department " in order to prepare for his own investigation .

= = = Travels to Jonestown = = =

On November 1 , 1978 , Ryan announced that he would visit Jonestown . He did so as part of a government investigation and received permission and government funds to do so . He made the journey in his role as chairman of a congressional subcommittee with jurisdiction over U.S. citizens living in foreign countries . He asked the other members of his Bay Area congressional delegation to join him on the investigation to Jonestown , but they all declined his invitation . Ryan had also asked his friend , Indiana Congressman and future Vice President Dan Quayle , to accompany him ? Quayle had served with Ryan on the Government Operations Committee ? but Quayle was unable to go on the trip .

While the party was initially planned to consist of only a few members of the Congressman 's staff and press as part of the congressional delegation , once the media learned of the trip the entourage ballooned to include , among others , concerned relatives of Temple members . Congressman Ryan traveled to Jonestown with 17 Bay Area relatives of Peoples Temple members , several newspaper reporters and an NBC TV team . When the legal counsel for Jones attempted to impose several restrictive conditions on the visit , Ryan responded that he would be traveling to Jonestown whether

Jones permitted it or not . Ryan 's stated position was that a " settlement deep in the bush might be reasonably run on authoritarian lines " . However , residents of the settlement must be allowed to come and go as they pleased . He further asserted that if the situation had become " a gulag " , he would do everything he could to " free the captives " .

= = = Jungle ambush and assassination = = =

On November 14 , according to the Foreign Affairs Committee report , Ryan left Washington and arrived in Georgetown , the capital of Guyana located 150 miles ( 240 km ) away from Jonestown , with his congressional delegation of government officials , media representatives and some members of the " Concerned Relatives " .

That night the delegation stayed at a local hotel where , despite confirmed reservations , most of the rooms had been canceled and reassigned , leaving the delegation sleeping in the lobby . For three days , Ryan continued negotiation with Jones 's legal counsel and held perfunctory meetings with embassy personnel and Guyanese officials .

While in Georgetown , Ryan visited the Temple 's Georgetown headquarters in the suburb of Lamaha Gardens . Ryan asked to speak to Jones by radio , but Sharon Amos , the highest @-@ ranking Temple member present , told Ryan that he could not because his present visit was unscheduled . On November 17 , Ryan 's aide Jackie Speier ( who became a Congresswoman in April 2008 ) , the United States embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Dwyer , a Guyanese Ministry of Information officer , nine journalists , and four Concerned Relatives representatives of the delegation boarded a small plane for the flight to an airfield at Port Kaituma a few miles outside of Jonestown . At first , only the Temple legal counsel was allowed off the plane , but eventually the entire entourage ( including Gordon Lindsay , reporting for NBC ) was allowed in . Initially , the welcome at Jonestown was warm , but Temple member Vernon Gosney handed a note to NBC correspondent Don Harris which stated , " Please help me get out of Jonestown , " listing himself and Temple member Monica Bagby . That night , the media and the delegation were returned to the airfield for accommodations following Jones ' refusal to allow them to stay the night ; the rest of the group remained . The next morning , Ryan , Speier , and Dwyer all continued their interviews , and in the morning met a woman who secretly expressed her wish to leave Jonestown with her family and another family . Around 11 : 00 A.M. local time , the media and the delegation returned and took part in interviewing Peoples Temple members . Around 3 : 00 p.m. , 14 Temple defectors , and Larry Layton posing as a defector , boarded a truck and were taken to the airstrip , with Ryan wishing to stay another night to assist any others that wished to leave . Shortly thereafter , a failed knife attack on Congressman Ryan occurred while he was arbitrating a family dispute on leaving . Against Ryan 's protests , Deputy Chief of Mission Dwyer ordered Ryan to leave , but he promised to return later to address the dispute .

The entire group left Jonestown and arrived at the Kaituma airstrip by 4 : 45 p.m. local time . Their exit transport planes , a twin @-@ engine Otter and a Cessna , did not arrive until 5 : 10 p.m. The smaller six @-@ seat Cessna was just taxiing to the end of the runway when one of its occupants , Larry Layton , opened fire on those inside , wounding several . Concurrently , several other Peoples Temple members who had escorted the group out began to open fire on the transport plane , killing Congressman Ryan , three journalists and a defecting Temple member , while wounding nine others , including Speier . The gunmen riddled Congressman Ryan 's body with bullets before shooting him in the face . The passengers on the Cessna subdued Larry Layton and the surviving people on both planes fled into nearby fields during and after the attack .

That afternoon , before the news became public , the wife of Ryan 's aide , William Holsinger , received three threatening phone calls . The caller allegedly stated , " Tell your husband that his meal ticket just had his brains blown out , and he better be careful . " The Holsingers then fled to Lake Tahoe and later to a ranch in Houston . They never returned to San Francisco . Following its takeoff , the Cessna radioed in a report of the attack , and the U.S. Ambassador , John R. Burke , went to the residence of Prime Minister Forbes Burnham . It was not until the next morning that the Guyanese army could cut through the jungle and reach the settlement . They discovered 909 of its

inhabitants dead ; the individuals died in what the United States House of Representatives described as a " mass suicide / murder ritual " .

= = = Conviction of Larry Layton = = =

Larry Layton , brother of author and former Peoples Temple member Deborah Layton , was convicted in 1986 of conspiracy in the murder of Leo Ryan . Temple defectors boarding the truck to Port Kaituma warned about Larry Layton that " there 's no way he 's a defector . He 's too close to Jones . " Layton was the only former Peoples Temple member to be tried in the United States for criminal acts relating to the murders at Jonestown . He was convicted on four different murder @-@ related counts .

On March 3 , 1987 , Layton was sentenced to concurrent sentences of life in prison for " aiding and abetting the murder of Congressman Leo Ryan " , " conspiracy to murder an internationally protected person , Richard Dwyer , Deputy Chief of Mission for the United States in the Republic of Guyana " , as well as fifteen years in prison on other related counts . At that time , he was eligible for parole in five years . On June 3 , 1987 , Layton 's motion to set aside the conviction " on the ground that he was denied the effective assistance of counsel during his second trial " was denied by the United States District Court of the Northern District of California . After spending eighteen years in prison , Layton was released from custody in April 2002 .

= = Memorial = =

In honor of Leo Ryan , Veterans for Peace Chapter 124 was named after him . VFP 124 Leo J. Ryan Memorial .

= = = Burial = = =

Leo Ryan 's body was returned to the United States and interred at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno , California . The official Congressional Memorial Services for Ryan were compiled into a book : Leo J. Ryan ? Memorial Services ? Held In The House Of Representatives & Senate Of The U. S. , Together With Remarks . Ryan 's younger sister Shannon said she was surprised both by the number of supporters that attended the funeral , and by the " outgrowth of real , honest sorrow " .

= = Legacy and honors = =

1983 Ryan was posthumously awarded a Congressional Gold Medal by the United States Congress , as the only member of Congress killed while in the line of duty ; the bill was signed by President Ronald Reagan . In President Reagan 's remarks about the medal , he said : " It was typical of Leo Ryan 's concern for his constituents that he would investigate personally the rumors of mistreatment in Jonestown that reportedly affected so many from his district . " Ryan 's daughters Patricia and Erin had helped to garner support for the Congressional Gold Medal , in time for the fifth anniversary of Ryan 's death .

1984 , the National Archives and Records Center in San Bruno , California was named the Leo J. Ryan Federal Building in his honor , through a Congressional bill passed unanimously and signed by President Reagan .

Jackie Speier , Ryan 's former aide , was elected in 1998 to the California State Senate . In 2008 she won a special election to the US Congress from California 's 12th congressional district , much of it formerly Ryan 's constituency . After redistricting , since 2013 it has been designated as the state 's 14th congressional district .

= = = Daughters = = =

Shannon Jo Ryan , the eldest daughter , joined the Rajneesh movement . After the Bhagwan moved to Oregon in 1981 , she joined his commune , which became known as Rajneeshpuram . Taking the name Ma Amrita Pritam , by December 1982 she had married another member , who also lived at the commune .

Patricia Ryan received her Masters in Public Administration from the George Washington University in Washington , D.C. , and later served ( from 2001 @-@ 2012 ) until her retirement as Executive Director of the California Mental Health Directors Association ( now the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California ) . During the 1980s , she got involved as a volunteer and eventually served as president of Board of the national Cult Awareness Network .

Erin Ryan went to University of California 's Hastings School of Law , afterward working until 1992 as an intelligence analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency . She next worked in New York as a pastry chef for eight years . In 2000 Erin Ryan joined California Senator Jackie Speier in politics , working as her aide .

= = = Anniversaries = = =

On the 25th anniversary of his death , a special memorial tribute was held in his honor in Foster City , California . Ryan 's family and friends , including his three daughters and Jackie Speier , attended . The San Francisco Chronicle reported that " Over and over today , people described a great man who continually exceeded his constituents ' expectations . " Near the end of the memorial service , parents of those who had died in Jonestown stood to honor and thank Congressman Ryan for giving his life while trying to save their children . After the service ended , mounted police escorted the family and friends into Foster City 's Leo J. Ryan Memorial Park . A wreath was laid next to a commemorative rock that honors Ryan . The same year , his daughter Erin Ryan , an aide to Speier , attended a memorial for those who died at Jonestown , held at the Evergreen Cemetery in Oakland . On the anniversary of Congressman Ryan 's death , Jackie Speier and Patricia Ryan , his daughter and friend , visit his grave at the Golden Gate National Cemetery .

For the 30th anniversary , US Congresswoman Jackie Speier sponsored a bill to designate the United States Postal Service facility at 210 South Ellsworth Avenue in San Mateo , California , as the " Leo J. Ryan Post Office Building " . President George W. Bush signed it into law on October 21 , 2008 . On November 17 , 2008 , Jackie Speier spoke at the dedication ceremony at the post office . In part , she said ,

" There are those ? still , thirty years after his passing ? who question his motives , or the wisdom of his actions . But criticism was just fine with Leo . Leo Ryan never did anything because he thought it would make him popular . He was more interested in doing what he knew was right . "

= = In popular culture = =

Ryan has been portrayed in films about the Jonestown mass murder / suicide , including by actor Gene Barry in the 1979 film Guyana : Crime of the Century , and by Ned Beatty in the 1980 made @-@ for @-@ TV miniseries , Guyana Tragedy : The Story of Jim Jones .

His assassination was discussed in the documentaries Jonestown : The Life and Death of Peoples Temple ( 2006 ) , on The History Channel documentaries : Cults : Dangerous Devotion and Jonestown : Paradise Lost ( 2006 ) , as well as the MSNBC production , Witness to Jonestown ( 2008 ) , which aired on the 30th anniversary of Ryan 's assassination and the mass suicides at Jonestown .

= = Electoral history = =

Source

= = Published works = =

## Books

USA / From Where We Stand : Readings in Contemporary American Problems , Paperback book , Fearon Publishers , ( 1970 )

Understanding California Government and Politics , 152 pages , Fearon Publishers , ( 1966 )

## Congressional reports

NATO , pressures from the southern tier : Report of a study mission to Europe , August 5 ? 27 , 1975 , pursuant to H. Res. 315 , 22 pages , Published by United States Government Print Office , ( 1975 )

Vietnam and Korea : Human rights and U.S. assistance : a study mission report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs , U.S. House of Representatives , 15 pages , Published by United States Government Print Office , ( 1975 )

The United States oil shortage and the Arab @-@ Israeli conflict : Report of a study mission to the Middle East from October 22 to November 3 , 1973 , 76 pages , Published by United States Government Print Office , ( 1973 )