The Levine Family of Harlingen and Louis Levine in Particular

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The Levine family opens its retail outlet, The Man's Shop. Ben Levine was born in Poland-Russia in December 1904, but the following year his family immigrated to the US and soon Texas. He came to the Valley in 1926 to take employment in a music store operated by his sister and brother-in-law who were later to set him up in the Harlingen men's store and other relatives in Weslaco and McAllen. Marrying Fannie Gensberg of Seguin in 1928, they were to produce sons Leonard and Lewis who attended Harlingen schools. A star football player at UT Lewis was to return to Harlingen and join his father and brother Leonard in business in 1951. Ben was to die at age 88 in 1993. He was one of the founders of the Jewish temple in Mercedes and later in Harlingen. His wife who outfitted boy scouts in the store died in 1987 at age 79. After 56 years the store closed in Harlingen in 1990, but the store opened in Brownsville in 1984 continued.

The famed R. L. Hill House (now Casa Rama) built in 1933 at 1102 E. Taylor Avenue was occupied by Leonard D. and Flora Levine from about 1972 until 1988 or 1989. He was a partner in The Man's Shop and managed Hartogs.

Harlingen's first hospital built in 1923 on F Street years later became the property of Lou Levine. In 1973 land owner Levine donates the "little hospital" structure and, through the efforts of Betty Murray, the RGV Museum board agrees to accept it at the museum site. It become one of the feature attractions at the museum complex.

5/19/50 The concept for an international bridge in the vicinity of Los Indios is laid out by its "founding fathers" who want to set up the San Benito Bridge Co. On 5/28/59 about 30 men and women meet in San Benito to form a corporation to build a bridge under the name San Benito International Bridge Co. Harlingen subscribers to the $250,000 enterprise are O.F. Bakhaus, R.O. Bork, E.C. Breedlove, W.F. Devine, George W. Duncan, James F. Hefner, Ben Levine, and Mrs. Tillie Sondock.

Louis Levine is to attend Harlingen schools. In high school he becomes a star athlete. He is named All-South Texas halfback from the 1946 Cardinal team. Later at the University of Texas (Austin) he will be the starting halfback for two seasons. UT's Athletic Council of Varsity Sports confers upon him the "T" certificate for this football participation 1949-50. His accomplishments are recognized by his selection to the Rio Grande Valley Sports Hall of Fame in 1998.

He is to see military service in the U.S. Navy then returns to Harlingen where he commences a very busy commercial, public service, and social life in Harlingen. In 1960 he is president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and later (April 29, 1966) when it becomes the Harlingen Jaycees is awarded Life Membership. This same decade on January 21, 1964 he is presented the Boy Scouts Silver Beaver Award, this organization's highest scouter award. Still later (February 7, 1981) the Boy Scouts of America give him the Paisano Award in recognition of his services.
He is elected several terms to the City Commission and serves in this capacity from 12/12/72 until 12/10/76. As Chairman of the Swimming Pool Committee he is largely responsible for the installation of Olympic size pools at Victor and Pendleton Parks. As a standout competitive swimmer his son Ron will make use of both pools. The Harlingen Chamber of Commerce will duly recognize Lou Levin's efforts with a certificate of his "devoted and exemplary service". In addition "The Citizens of Harlingen recognize Louis Levine for his part in the history of this city as city commissioner."

In a critical and dynamic period of its existence the Valley International Airport at Harlingen is guided by Levine as its Airport Board Chairman in the late 1980s. He will serve on this board from March 1983 to March 1988.

Together with his wife Dena, the former Dena Mayer, he will raise a family while still volunteering his service to the community. In 1988 he is the Leukemia Society of America's "Top Money Raiser." The RGV Museum Association in 2002 will present him and his wife an Appreciation Award for their longtime support of the museum.

His has been active in Temple Beth Israel affairs and with its congregation. In 2010 Lou Levine was selected by the Rotary Club of Harlingen as an honoree for its Walk of Fame.

The Levine family from Harlingen is the same family from the Levine's that came to Mercedes. Lewis Levine father and my father-in-law were brothers. Their sisters were: Mary Levine Westerman (Mrs.Adolph Westerman) and Lily Levine Fallek (Mrs.Mike Fallek). All of the Levine, Westerman, Fallek families came to Weslaco to help me with the closing of Levine's Man Shop when my husband was in critical condition at M.D. Anderson. Few weeks ago, I went to Harlingen with David Westerman (The Man's Shop, McAllen) to visit Lewis and Dena Levine and celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. That was a very nice family reunion. (June 2011)