



Melvin Lewis

July 22, 1930 - February 21, 2016

Melvin Thomas Lewis, 85, passed away on February 21, 2016, surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Houston, Texas in July, 1930. Melvin was the youngest of five children born to Aaron and Rose Lewis, who settled in Houston many years earlier from their native homeland of Russia, a heritage that would always hold special meaning to Melvin. He attended Houston Schools, graduating from San Jacinto High School at the age of 16. He went on to attend the University of Texas in Austin, but was drafted into the Army after his first two years there. Upon returning home from the service, he completed his studies at the University of Houston where he graduated with a business degree in accounting. His first job out of college was as Chief Accountant for Foley's in Downtown Houston. It was the start of what would become a lifelong career in the retail industry. Soon after beginning work at his first job he was attending a singles dance when he met the love of his life, Marion. They were married in 1956, and two years later, welcomed their first daughter, Arlene, later followed by second daughter, Brenda. Family life was always extremely important and rewarding to Melvin. He loved celebrating birthdays, family occasions, and especially observing the Jewish Holidays together with his family....as long as everyone was together, he was happy. Melvin had many different interests throughout his life. In his younger days, he was quite athletic and enjoyed playing many sports. He was active in tennis, baseball and basketball. Later, he developed a love of golfing and even enjoyed regular participation in a bowling league, both of which activities

enabled him to enjoy being with his longtime groups of friends on a regular basis. In between work, family time or golf, Melvin would usually be enjoying another beloved interest which was listening to music. Love of music was something that ran deep in the Lewis household. When he was in his youth, he sang for the choir at his synagogue. Later, he developed a love of jazz music. His daughters grew up in a house that was always filled with the sounds of all the jazz greats and the big band sounds that filled him with joy, and they in turn, became music lovers themselves. Later in his life, in his late 40's, he was introduced to the Houston Balalaika Society by a beloved nephew. The HBS was an orchestra that performed various types of Russian and Eastern European folk music, a form of music that he instantly connected with stemming from his parents' Russian roots. Having a great ear for music, he taught himself how to play a balalaika, and for the next 20 plus years of his life, derived immense joy from performing for live audiences, and from the hours spend practicing and playing with his orchestra bandmates who had become a second family to him through the years. One of the biggest highlights for him was actually traveling to Russia with his group to perform on stage in 1993. Other various interests he enjoyed in his full life were the many nights spent with good buddies around the poker table in his weekly games for many years, and lastly, one of his biggest sources of pride came from being a 32nd Degree Mason in the Scottish Rite.

Though he enjoyed many interests, the most important part of Melvin's life, by far, centered on his family. From being a loving and loved, son and brother, to becoming a devoted husband, father, uncle and grandfather, Melvin was always happiest when surrounded by family members. He especially derived his greatest joy spending time with his 2 grandsons who were his biggest source of pride. With his oldest grandson, Sean, he shared his love of music, and with Harold, he shared his love of sports. A particular highlight of his life was when he had a second Bar Mitzvah upon reaching the age of 83, partnered together with Harold, who at 13 was having his first!

Melvin was preceded in death by his parents Aaron and Rose Lewis, and his

siblings and their spouses: Mitchell and Grace Lewis, Robert and Ann Lewis, Sophie and Jerry Bormaster, and Sara Lee and Milton Greenberg. He is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Marion Lewis, daughter Arlene Lewis and John Banks, daughter and son-in-law Brenda and Chuck Weiser, grandsons Sean and Harold Weiser, sisters-in-law Betty Aronowitz and Estelle Jucker, and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.