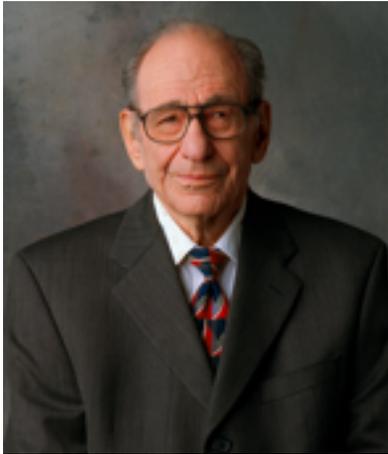


Gustave S. Levey



Gustave S. Levey was born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee on January 23, 1919. Shortly thereafter his family moved to Wichita, Kansas where Gus spent his formative years. To help out his family, Gus rode a paper route and, foreshadowing his future success, he soon became the route manager for all the other boys. His interest in business and need for money outweighed his interest in school, and he dropped out to manage the paper routes full time.

In 1943, Gus enlisted in the Army and applied to study for the officer's exam at the local college. He became a Lieutenant Navigator in the Army Air Corp and flew all over the world. While he was stationed in Miami he met his future wife, Marjorie. They married, and their daughter Vicky was born while they were stationed in Miami.

Following his discharge from the Army, Gus moved the family back to Wichita with an idea. While in Miami, Gus had noticed a body shop that painted cars in one day. During the winter months, a one-day turnaround in Wichita was unheard of. If Gus could figure out how to make that happen, he suspected he could turn it into a profitable endeavor.

Gus always found a way. He experimented with paint machinery and developed what he called the Hot Pot, a way to uniformly heat paint and apply it to achieve the one-day turn around. He opened a retail store for his new invention and named it Like Nu Auto-Paint. It was an immediate success — first in Wichita, then in Oklahoma City, Dallas, Houston and New Orleans.

Gus was having a ball, but one of his stores, the Houston location, wasn't making money. So, Gus set off to Houston to find a way to make it work. He drove out during a Wichita blizzard in deep winter and arrived in Houston on a temperate and beautiful winter day. He fired the local manager, moved the family to Houston, and never looked back.

Gus could have had a successful career in retail, but he was always looking toward the next challenge. He began to develop paint spray technologies. He was already a self-made businessman, but now he became a self-made scientist and self-made chemist.

Knowing he was on to something big, he applied for patents for his new technology. Soon competitors large and small began to infringe on his patents. He hired H.F. McNenny with Richey, McNenny & Farrington, a lawyer who became his colleague and guided his legal business decisions strategically and effectively. Mr. McNenny advised Gus to sue the largest of his competitors. They did, they won, and the victory led to settlements of the numerous suits against other infringing companies.

Gus sold the Like-Nu retail businesses to focus on manufacturing the paint spray equipment. He named the equipment Spee-Flo. Part of Spee-Flo's success was attributable to the use of its reliable hydraulic pump by the oil and gas industry.

At this point Gus realized his lack of education could impede his success, so he enrolled in the University of Houston and earned a degree in economics and, later, law. He once noted, "The only reason I became an attorney is because the chemistry department had no parking."

The Spee-Flo hydraulic pumps were so reliable that Gus sold the company to the oil and gas industry. Gus could have retired then, having made his mark on two industries with his technologies, but the oil and gas industry tanked, and Spee-Flo under its new ownership declared bankruptcy. The new owners approached Gus about buying back the company. He did and brought it back to life by re-engaging the paint industry. He turned the company profitable and sold it a second time.

Once again, Gus was at a comfortable place for retirement, but he realized another opportunity for innovation. While reinvigorating the Spee-Flo manufacturing business, he had generated a new concept when he built single tenant industrial buildings to accommodate his manufacturing process.

Gus established a single-tenant industrial development, construction and management business called GSL Investments, Inc. He built over 100 buildings throughout the Gulf Coast region until 1998 when he sold the company, along with a substantial part of the portfolio.

Following the sale of GSL, Gus financed developers of single-tenant industrial real estate and also redeveloped functionally obsolete industrial real estate. In 2006, his grandson David Ebro joined him and together they re-entered the ground-up industrial development business.

Throughout his amazing career, Gus made his mark as a business innovator, and he did so with ethics and values. Gus was a supporter of civil rights. During his time, it was the law that all manufacturing plants needed two bathrooms to ensure segregation by race. Gus risked his reputation, and he refused to cave in to the racist regulation by building his manufacturing plant with a single bathroom. He integrated his business across racial lines.

He was committed to humanitarian values as well as his Jewish values. Gus was deeply committed to the state of Israel. His wife Marjorie had family who perished in the Holocaust, so they both knew firsthand how important it was to have a strong homeland in Israel.

He was a fervent supporter of Israel bonds and was a founding leader of the American Associates of the Ben Gurion University. As a father, his daughter Vicky reports “He was the grandest man I have ever known. He looked out for everyone who crossed his path—rich, poor, all races and creeds. He always emphasized education and knowledge.” His nuggets of wisdom were infinite; one example is “Never take the time of a salesman, unless you have the intention of buying.” Gus understood the essence of human kindness, decency and civic responsibility.

From observing a quick paint job in Miami to becoming one of the leading business innovators and real estate developers in the Gulf Coast region, Gus lived a moral and deliberate life, observing business trends large and small, seizing opportunities and courageously transitioning from one industry to the next.