



L·V·H·S·A·A

Las Vegas High School Alumni Association

BERKELEY L. BUNKER (Class of 1926)

Berkeley L. Bunker was born in St. Thomas, NV (now a northern arm of Lake Mead) on August 12, 1906. He graduated from Las Vegas High School (then called Clark County High School) in 1926. He married Lucile Whitehead, and then entered the tire and oil business in Las Vegas in 1934.

The Democrat Bunker was a member of the Nevada Assembly from 1936 to 1941, serving as speaker in 1939. In November, 1940, Governor Edward P. Carville appointed Bunker to replace U.S. Senator Key Pittman who died just after being re-elected. Bunker served until December 6, 1942. The young new senator, whom Carville likely chose as a compromise candidate because “Nobody was made at Berkeley Bunker”, later claimed to be the most surprised man in the state, as he had not asked for the job. Bunker was the first Southern Nevadan and first Nevadan Mormon, to serve in federal office. As a Senator he made headlines by accusing Basic Magnesium of having negotiated a contract with the government to get exorbitant profits. Berkeley lost in the Democrat primary for the 1942 special election, but was elected in 1944 to Nevada’s only House seat after defeating incumbent Maurice Sullivan in the primary and Republican former actor Rex Bell in the general election. In 1946 he introduced a bill to incorporate Boulder City, NV, removing it from Federal control, but the bill never made it out of committee.

After leaving politics in 1947, Bunker became a hotel manager, and then joined his brother in founding the Bunker Brothers Mortuary. He ran for Lieutenant Governor in 1962 but lost to Republican Paul Laxalt.

Bunker died in 1999 at the age of 92, and is interred in Bunkers Eden Vale Cemetery. He was the last living person who had served as a Senator during the time FDR was President. Berkeley L. Bunker Elementary School in Las Vegas is named after him.

Bunker was a member of the LDS Church and served a mission in the southern United States after high school and before his marriage. After his time in the Senate, Bunker served as bishop of an LDS ward in Las Vegas and was involved with the building of the Las Vegas Temple.

These biographies are based on research and could contain discrepancies.
If there are any excerpts you feel should be changed please feel free to contact dave@lvhsaa.com

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