



MANUEL J. CORTEZ (Class of 1956)

Manuel J. “Manny” Cortez moved to Las Vegas in 1944. Manny served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Elected in 1976 to the Clark County Commission, Mr. Cortez went on to serve four terms. He began his service on the LVCVA board of directors in 1983 and was chairman from 1985 through 1990. On July 2, 1991, he became president of the LVCVA, the largest convention and visitors organization in the United States. That year, Southern Nevada tracked visitor volume at just over 21 million. In 2004, the year of his retirement, Las Vegas welcomed 37.4 million visitors.

Mr. Cortez and the LVCVA were honored with awards from Facilities Magazine, the Government Finance Officers Association, Meetings & Conventions magazine, Successful Meetings, Incentive Magazine and the American Society of Travel Agents, among others.

Elected in 1976 to the Clark County Commission, Mr. Cortez went on to serve four terms, during which time he was chairman of the county commission as well as chairman of the Clark County Sanitation District and the Clark County Liquor and Gaming Licensing Board. He was also on the governing boards of the University Medical Center and the Las Vegas Valley Water District and on the Fiscal Affairs Board of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. Prior to taking office as a county commissioner, Mr. Cortez served as administrator of the State of Nevada Taxicab Authority by appointment of the governor. His background also includes employment with the Clark County District Attorney’s office and the Clark County Public Defender’s office.

Mr. Cortez was a participant in the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism in 1995. In 2003, the United States Department of Commerce appointed him to the then-newly created U.S. Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board. Cortez’ role on the board included representing Las Vegas and the U.S. travel and tourism industry. He was among 130 candidates reviewed for appointment to the 15-member board, which represents a bi-partisan cross-section of the travel and tourism industry.

In addition to other tourism industry affiliations, he served on the board of directors for the Travel Industry Association of America. He was active in the community, serving on several local boards and associations.

Travel Agent magazine named Mr. Cortez the United States Person of the Year for 1999, calling him “one of the most astute marketers in the tourism industry.” During his tenure as president of the LVCVA, the organization came to be regarded as the travel industry’s leading destination marketing organization.

The same year 1999, the Manuel J. Cortez Elementary School on Tonopah Avenue in Las Vegas was named for him.

Mr. Cortez is credited with, among other accomplishments, helping Southern Nevada recover from the effects of September 11, 2001.

He retired in 2004 after 13 years as President and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, including the period during which the “What happens in Las Vegas Stays in Las Vegas” ad campaign originated. Under Cortez's leadership, Las Vegas nearly doubled its annual visitor base and evolved into one of the world's best-known tourism and trade show destinations.

Former Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) President and CEO Manuel J. “Manny” Cortez passed away on Sunday, June 18. He was 67 years old.

An avid fisherman, Mr. Cortez is remembered for his love of the outdoors, devotion to his family and adventurous spirit.

Manny was married to Joanna Musso (LVHS Class of 1955) for 45 years. He is survived by his wife Joanna, his two daughters and two grandchildren.

His youngest daughter, Catherine Cortez Masto is the current Attorney General of the State of Nevada.

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 me at Dave@lvhsaa.com

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