



MANUEL J. CORTEZ (Class of 1956)

Manuel (Manny) Cortez was a resident of Las Vegas from 1944 on. After graduating from Las Vegas High in 1956, he served in the U.S. Army for three years.

In 1976 he was elected to the Clark County Commission, and went on to serve four terms during which 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 on the governing boards of the University Medical Center and the Las Vegas Valley Water District, and the Fiscal Affairs Board of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. Prior to taking office as a County Commissioner, he served as administrator of the State of Nevada Taxicab Authority by appointment of the governor. His background also included employment with the Clark County District Attorney's office and the Clark County Public Defender's office.

His convention career began on the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) board of directors in 1983. He was chairman from 1985 through 1990. In 1991, he became president. That year Southern Nevada tracked visitor volume at just over 21 million. In 2004, when he retired after serving 13 years as President and CEO, Las Vegas had welcomed 37.4 million visitors. During his tenure, the "What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas" ad campaign originated. Under Manny's leadership, Las Vegas evolved into one of the world best-known tourism and trade show destinations in the U.S. Manny is also credited with helping Southern Nevada recover from the effects of 09/11/01.

Travel Agent magazine named Manny the United States Person of the Year in 1999, calling his "one of the most astute marketers in the tourism industry". That same year, the Manuel J. Cortez Elementary School on Tonopah Avenue in Las Vegas was named in his honor.

Manny was a participant in the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism in 1995. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Commerce appointed him to the U.S. Travel and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board. His 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. He also served on the board of directors for the Travel Industry Association of America. He was active in the local community, serving on several boards and associations.

Manny died in Las Vegas on June 18, 2006 at the age of 56. He was married to Joanna Musso (LVHS Class of 1955) for 45 years. They had two daughters and two grandchildren.

His youngest daughter, Catherine Cortez Mastro, 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 david@bitn-pr.com.

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