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Obituaries

Samuel Leviten dies, 79; founded Big G markets

NEW BEDFORD, Mass. — Samuel Leviten, 79, who founded the former Big G supermarket chain in Rhode Island and southeastern New England, died Monday at the New Bedford Jewish Convalescent Home.

Mr. Leviten and his brother, the late Morris Leviten, started in the wholesale grocery business, and in 1939 the company's first supermarket opened.

The company, Great Scott Food Market Inc., adopted the name "Big G" for its stores in 1963, and by 1974 was operating 24 supermarkets in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Mr. Leviten eventually became chairman of the board of the company, which in 1976 filed for an arrangement with creditors under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy laws following the closing of a number of the Big G stores.

A year later, the company was sold to J.F.&S. Realty of Canton, Mass., which operates Valueland and Scott's Food Stores in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Mr. Leviten was born in Fall River, Mass., son of the late Harry and Mary (Deleson) Leviten. He was a graduate of B.M.C. Durfee High School. He lived in Fall River for many years before moving to Providence.

In 1975, he was one of the last permanent residents of the Biltmore Hotel to leave before its closing and subsequent rehabilitation and reopening.

He told a reporter that he had was forced to move from the suite of five rooms on the 15th floor he had lived in for 22 years when the hotel abruptly closed and heat and water were shut off.

Although suprised at the swiftness of the closing after years of what he described as declining service, Mr. Leviten had spoken glowingly of the hotel's history.

"This was a landmark," he told a reporter at the time. "This was one of the best hotels in the country at one time. They don't build them like this anymore."

At one time, Mr. Leviten's interests included horses and carriages, and in the 1940s he maintained a stable of four horses and a half-dozen carriages at his home in Fall River.

He was the subject of a newspaper story in May of 1942, when he "commuted" from Fall River to Providence in a 1905 red and green carriage pulled by two horses, a trip which took two hours one-way.

Mr. Leviten was a member of Fall River's Temple Beth El, Mount Hope Masonic Lodge, and the Valley of Fall River Consistory, and the Aleppo Masonic Temple, Boston.

He leaves two sisters, Ida Portnoy of New Bedford and Annie Feinstein of Providence. Funeral services were held yesterday morning at Fisher Memorial Chapel, 422 N. Main St., Fall River, with burial in Temple Beth El Cemetery.

LEVITEN, SAMUEL