

OBITUARIES

Morton Levine flagged Oswald immigration file

As an INS official, he warned that Lee Harvey Oswald should not be allowed to return from the Soviet Union.

By **BEN COHEN** Star Tribune | JANUARY 3, 2008 — 8:39PM

Morton Levine of St. Louis Park, a former U.S. immigration official, once warned that Lee Harvey Oswald should not be allowed back into the United States after he emigrated to the old Soviet Union.

The Duluth native, who wound up his career in the Minneapolis office of the old Immigration and Naturalization Service, died on Jan. 2 in St. Louis Park. He was 91.

After graduation from Duluth's Central High School, he earned his degree in economics from the University of Minnesota, joining the Navy in 1941.

He cut his investigative teeth while in the Navy, after he was assigned to examine the bookkeeping in a corruption case at a Navy base exchange, said his daughter, Harriet Bart of Minneapolis.

After the war, he began his INS career in North Dakota.

He studied law in California while serving in San Francisco as an investigator of illegal immigration from China in the 1940s and 1950s.

In 1957, he served in Washington, D.C., at INS headquarters. There, the Oswald case came across his desk at least twice.

But higher-ups allowed the expatriate who had married a Russian woman to return to the United States before the Kennedy assassination.

Levine's testimony can be found in the Warren Commission report on the assassination.

In Washington, he refused to help a government official to bend the law, who wanted to retain an illegal immigrant as a nanny.

"No way he would support their intentions," said his daughter. "He loved the law, and his nation."

In 1954, while serving as an INS administrative law judge, he reported the futility of building a fence along the U. S.-Mexican border, said his daughter.

After moving to Minneapolis, he was sent on temporary duty to Alaska to investigate espionage, said his daughter.

By 1971, he was legally blind from glaucoma, and said in a 1980 Minneapolis Star Tribune article, "I was in a state of euphoria," after new lens technology helped his eyesight.

When he retired in 1975, he was assistant commissioner of security for the northwest region of the old INS.

Levine then became a consultant to immigration attorneys in the Twin Cities.

Minneapolis attorney John Benson called Levine "a legal scholar" and said he helped form the nation's deportation laws.

"He had a strong moral compass," Benson said.

Levine also volunteered his expertise in immigration law, and served as a volunteer ombudsman for the Jewish Community Center of Greater Minneapolis in St. Louis Park.



FEED LOADER - STAR TRIBUNE

Morton Levine

In addition to Harriet, he is survived by his wife of 69 years, Natalie of St. Louis Park; his other daughter, Tammy Farace of Tucson, Ariz.; two sisters, Marion Goodman and Rosalie Burns, both of San Jose, Calif., three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at 1 p.m. today at Temple Israel, 2324 Emerson Av S., Minneapolis. Shiva will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday at Knollwood Place, 3630 Phillips Pkwy., St. Louis Park.
