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hose of few men today with such patriotic qualifications who are able to boast of achieving as much in the areas of economic and philanthropic success as Maurice Heymann, who was only afforded a sixth-grade education.

As the only child born to Polish immigrants, who arrived in New Orleans on a boat filled with Catholic nuns and priests, Maurice was distinguished early in life by his charitable spirit.

"He used to say, 'I don't understand why people think I've done too much for the community,'" says Herbert Heymann, Maurice's son, who took over his father's business after Maurice's death in 1960.

"He never forgot where he came from," says Herbert, explaining the drive to recreate the image of his father's character which Lafayette grew to love.

During the Depression, people did not have much money to spend, and they were forced to get by with what they had. Maurice, however, showed that there were necessities that had to be purchased. He raised more than $100,000 in cash to enable customers at a time when Heymann's department store ran on cash only, accepting no credit or cash accounts in that policy.

His generosity affected many charity organizations in Lafayette as well particularly the Catholic community with which he maintained a close relationship. Although his family was Jewish, Maurice Heymann and his parents were devoted to their Catholic friends, whom they met while homologating in America.

"My dad's mother became very close to the nuns and priests," Herbert says. "She did a lot of charity work for the Sisters of St. Paul, the Congregation of St. Joseph, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Catholic charities, and she taught me to be charitable and to give of my time.

Before Maurice knew success in Lafayette, though, he was well acquainted with failure. His first independent business venture ended the New Orleans business venture in 1926. The cumbersome merchant, called the "Biscuit Man," was formed to market products in the area, opened a five-and-dime store but had to supplement his income by playing piano at a silent movie theater. His venture ultimately failed, and he and his father moved to Arizona, where he worked, saving his way up from trading with the local Indians to gaining an appointment as superintendent of an Indian reservation. It was Maurice's skills set and savvy with people that paved the way for his appointment to the position, which required posting a written examination. Heymann knew the federal education might hold him back from gaining the respect so he continued the administration of the test to permit him to take it only, and he passed easily.

Maurice resigned from that post when his father died and moved to his brother, at his store in Reno, Nevada, saved enough money to purchase his own store in Lafayette years later, and he applied all of the skills he had acquired in business management and public relations from his earlier endeavors. He was then the size of a monopoly for Lafayette's established business owners, as he devoted continuous hours to developing marketing strategies to compete against the bigger, established downtown stores. Although Maurice had a brief education, he devoted much of his free time to reading about successful merchants and would encourage them in his own stores.

Herbert says it was competition which encouraged his father to down a department store, the first of its kind in the area. It included a better shop, a drug store, a clothing department, a hardware department and a automobile department, offering his customers a convenience one-step option.

Though Maurice would work year-round, he would take a month or two each summer to travel with his family. Herbert says, "None of his favorite memories are of trips taken with his late son since he rejected and maintained his mother's homestay in Clarion, France.

Herbert says his father's self-education and disciplined philosophy of hard work and ability to relate to people from all walks of life, from wealthy to poor, Catholic to Jewish, black to white, rewarding him with a reputation that he exceeded his lifetime of monetary contributions to Lafayette.

"He was one of the truly successful men who was very nice to the black people," Herbert says. "He just treated them the same as (he treated) everyone else."

Top Left: Maurice Heymann, Right: With unidentified Oil Executives in 1953.

Above: Heymann's Downtown Department Store in Early 1950s.

Left: Herbert, left, and late sister Jacqueline with their father on summer vacation.