

= Jim Hensley =

James Willis " Jim " Hensley (April 12 , 1920 ? June 21 , 2000) was an American businessman in the beer industry .

Hensley was born in Texas and moved to Arizona during his youth . He was a bombardier on B @-@ 17 Flying Fortresses during World War II and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross . After the war he was convicted of illegal distribution of liquor and was also involved in a racetrack operation that was investigated by authorities .

He founded Hensley & Co. in 1955 . Headquartered in Phoenix , it grew to be one of the largest Anheuser @-@ Busch beer distributorships in the nation . One of Arizona 's richest men at the time of his death , Hensley was the father of Cindy Hensley McCain and the father @-@ in @-@ law of United States Senator and 2000 and 2008 presidential candidate John McCain .

= = Early life , military service and family = =

Hensley was born in San Antonio , Texas to Jessie and James L. Hensley . The family was poor and his father was an alcoholic . They lived in the South until moving to Arizona ; Hensley graduated from Phoenix Union High School in 1936 . He married Mary Jeanne Parks , his high school sweetheart , around 1937 , and worked as a paper salesman .

Hensley and his older brother , Eugene , first began working in the liquor distribution business before World War II , being in the employ of Kemper Marley , Sr. , an Arizona rancher who had become wealthy in that business in Phoenix and Tucson following the end of Prohibition . The brothers started the United Liquor Co. in Phoenix and the United Distribution Co. in Tucson .

Jim Hensley then served three years as an officer in the United States Army Air Forces during World War II . He was a bombardier on B @-@ 17 Flying Fortresses . On his thirteenth mission , his plane was shot down over the English Channel ; around the same time , his wife gave birth to their daughter , Kathleen Ann Hensley , in February 1943 . In all , his planes were shot down two or three times . He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross .

Hensley was injured during his service , and sent to a West Virginia medical facility to recover . There he met Marguerite " Smitty " Johnson (born Cairo , Illinois , January 16 , 1919 , died Scottsdale , Arizona , October 11 , 2006 , daughter of Swedish American parents) , who had one daughter , Dixie , from a previous relationship . Hensley divorced his wife , and shortly thereafter married Marguerite on March 29 , 1945 in Memphis , Tennessee while on leave from the USAAF . They would have one child together , Cindy Lou Hensley , born 1954 . Hensley 's first daughter grew up with her mother , but he maintained occasional contact with her .

= = Early business career , legal issues = =

Following his discharge in 1945 , Hensley and his brother went back to work for Marley in his United Sales Company in Phoenix and United Distributors in Tucson . In 1948 , both brothers were prosecuted by the federal government and convicted of multiple counts of falsifying liquor records in a conspiracy to conceal illegal distribution of whiskey against post @-@ war rationing regulations . Jim Hensley received a six @-@ month sentence (later upheld but suspended by an appeals court) while his brother received a year in federal prison , and both were fined . In 1953 , Jim Hensley and Marley were charged by federal prosecutors with falsifying liquor records . Defended by future Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist , they were acquitted .

In December 1952 , the Hensley brothers bought into the Ruidoso Downs racetrack in New Mexico , with Eugene running it and Jim returning to Phoenix . In a May 1953 hearing before the New Mexico State Racing Commission , the Hensley brothers concealed the existence an equal partner , Clarence " Teak " Baldwin , who had been banned from any ownership role due to illegal bookmaking activities . A 1953 New Mexico State Police investigation found further that Kemper Marley was a financial backer for bookmakers and had connections with Baldwin and with the bookmaking operations of organized crime , a conclusion echoed decades later by the Arizona

Project investigative reporting team . The Hensley brothers gained their Ruidoso Downs racetrack license in 1953 , as no New Mexico law barred convicted felons from race track ownership , although in 1955 new Governor of New Mexico John F. Simms would say he was " appalled " by the previous administration 's decision to do so . Previous Governor Edwin L. Mechem had defended the approval , saying that the Hensleys had been under constant surveillance and deserved continued attention , but that no action was taken against them because the investigation showed that as race tracks go , all laws apparently were being observed . Jim Hensley would sell his interest in Ruidoso Downs to his brother Eugene in 1955 (who would in turn sell it to a Marley @-@ connected company in 1969) .

= = Hensley & Co . = =

In 1955 , Hensley founded the beer distributorship that would have his name , borrowing \$ 10 @,@ 000 against everything he had to buy a small existing distributorship . He was given a state liquor license despite his normally disqualifying past felony conviction . At the start it had 15 workers , sold 73 @,@ 000 cases of beer a year , and had a 6 percent market share . Hensley soon switched to exclusively distributing Anheuser @-@ Busch beer . Under the early names Hensley & Company Distributors and Hensley & Company Wholesale , the company saw decades of steady growth . It was aided by the Phoenix area becoming one of the fastest @-@ growing regions of the country while the company maintained its position as Anheuser @-@ Busch 's only distributor there . Jim Hensley 's tireless sales efforts and the generous wages and benefits he gave employees were also key success factors . By 1980 the business had become quite successful and Jim Hensley was a multi @-@ millionaire . Hensley had also distanced himself from Marley , and had helped set up a local hospital ; nevertheless , he was never fully accepted by the Phoenix establishment .

In 1981 , Hensley hired his new son @-@ in @-@ law John McCain , recently married to his daughter Cindy , as Vice President of Public Relations for Hensley & Co . McCain soon left to begin his Congressional career with a victory in the 1982 election for U.S. House of Representatives . Jim Hensley 's past record with the law , as well as his past connection to Marley (who was suspected by the police in the 1976 car @-@ bomb murder of Arizona Republic investigative reporter Don Bolles) , were raised by McCain 's opponent in the 1986 general election campaign for the U.S. Senate . McCain won that election handily .

As his business continued to grow , Hensley became one of Arizona 's richest men , although he never sought publicity . He held most of the controlling stock in Hensley & Co . , although by 2000 his health was poor and he had withdrawn from daily operational control . With 500 employees , annual revenues at the time were about \$ 220 million on 20 million cases of beer sold ; Hensley & Co. was the second @-@ largest Anheuser @-@ Busch distributor in the nation , the fifth @-@ largest beer distributorship overall in the nation and the 12th largest privately held company in Arizona . Jim Hensley was a major contributor to charity in the Phoenix metropolitan area as well , starting the Hensley Family Foundation . He also supported groups such as NASCAR and Gilbert Rodeo Days .

Hensley died in Phoenix on June 21 , 2000 . His frequently @-@ amended will left his entire estate to Cindy Hensley McCain , who became the controlling stockholder and chair of the board after his death . His first daughter Kathleen , her husband and children had received substantial ongoing gifts , credit cards , and college tuition payments in the decade before his death , but were left only one modest lump sum from his estate .