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My Story: Welcome Wilson Sr.

*Parkway Properties is sponsoring tomorrow's big event, the annual **State of the Market** ([register here](#)). Last month, Parkway hosted our Power Networking event in Phoenix Tower, their latest acquisition in Houston as they continue to grow. [Learn more here](#).*

He's a former Naval Officer, **night club singer**, special ambassador, government appointee, cancer survivor, and drummer. Yet it took some **questionable advice** to get GSL Welcome Group chairman **Welcome Wilson Sr.** into real estate: He was working in oil and gas for R.E. "**Bob**" **Smith**, who told him that was a dying industry and real estate was the future of Houston.



So in **1957**, the living legend began developing **Jamaica Beach** in Galveston, and at **85 years old**, he's not slowing down. Welcome's developed **4M SF** of industrial properties, over 1,000 apartment units and 8,000 subdivision lots, multiple shopping centers, Downtown office buildings, and hotels. GSL Welcome Group owns **80 buildings** in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin. Welcome is known for his **country sayings** like "the syrup and the biscuits will come out even" and "you'll get another kiss at the pig."



Here's Welcome between his sons **Welcome Jr.** and **Craig**, who [work with him](#) at GSL Welcome Group. Welcome's **38-person** family, which now includes great-grandchildren, takes a trip each fall. Some other fun facts: He worked on a **hog farm** as a kid, and in college, he performed in night clubs as a **comedy act singer** and did singing commercials. He married his college sweetheart, **Joanne**, the day he graduated from U of H in 1949.



Welcome's commitment to **U of H** is well-known; he's a former chairman of its board of regents and is building the Real Estate Graduate Program there. (Above, he and UH's **John Walsh** accept a check from then-HOLBA prez **Brandi McDonald** for that program.) Welcome served in the executive office of the president under **JFK**—speaking with him in Houston **the night before he was assassinated**—and was LBJ's special ambassador to Nicaragua. In 1970, he was a **10% owner in the Astros**. We'll end with some truly quirky tidbits: Welcome once spent a night in a Tokyo Geisha house, where he **paid extra** to sleep alone. Also, he ate nothing but **bananas** for 13 days in college.