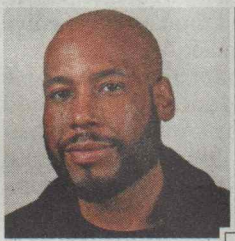


VILLAGER BACKSTORY



**You may know
Lonnie Levy as a
basketball player in
The Villages, but what
you might not know
is that the Village of
Bonnybrook resident
worked in the Garment
District in New York City
for 35 years.**



**Jammel
Cutler**

THE VILLAGES
DAILY SUN

*Do you know
someone with an
interesting backstory
to tell? Email
jammel.cutler@
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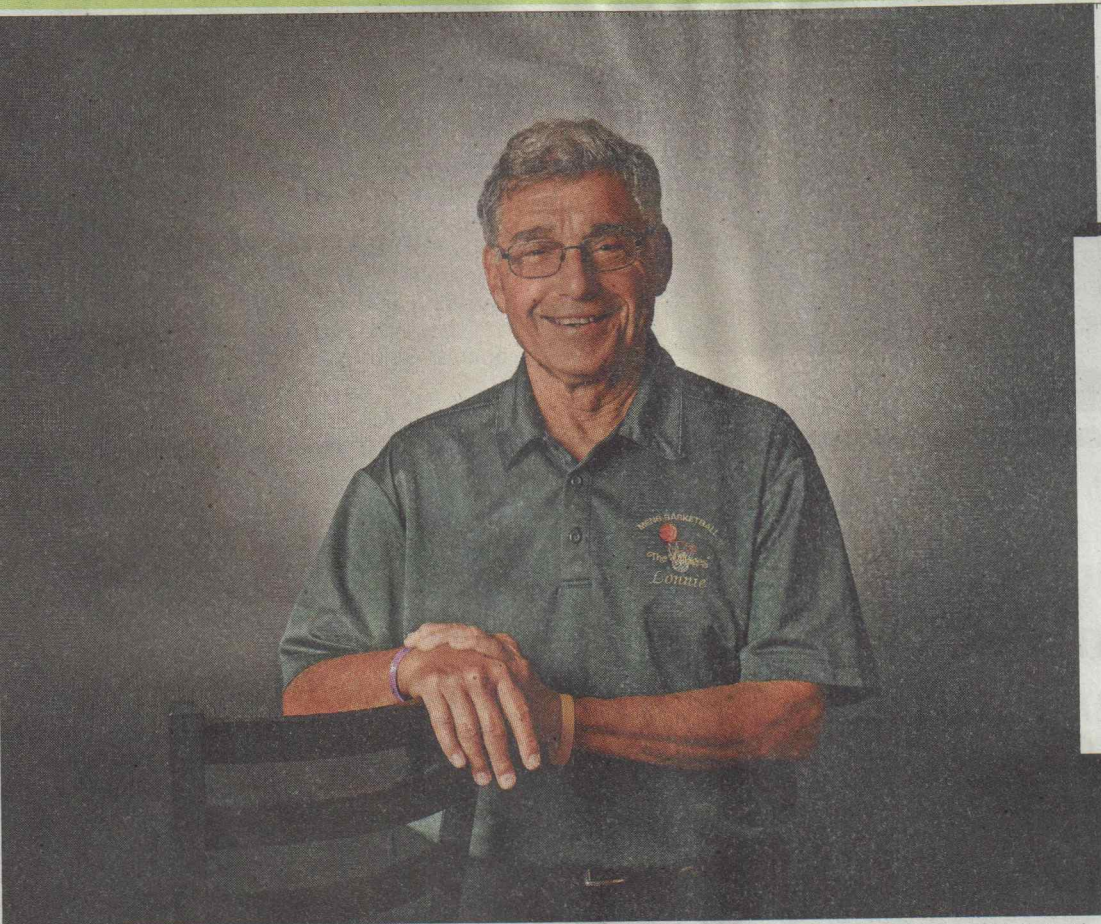
The Villages is a melting pot of people from all over the country, but New Yorkers certainly have an extensive presence. Lonnie Levy is one of the people who called Brooklyn, New York home.

"I loved the era I grew up in," he said. "It was a simple life. Everybody knew everybody. You didn't have to keep your doors locked. You obviously didn't have any of the Internet or technology we have today, so it was a much simpler life. It was easier."

In New York, basketball is ingrained into the culture. Levy spent some of his time in the city lacing up to play basketball in the famed parks throughout the five boroughs.

"I had a small frame, but that didn't stop me — I loved to play," he said. "Many times I played against guys twice my size. I played street basketball for around 35 years until I couldn't

local news



George Horsford | Daily Sun

**GETTING TO KNOW
LONNIE LEVY****Spouse:** Shellie**Age:** 83**Family:** Three children,
three grandchildren**Village:** Bonnybrook**Moved in:** 2004**Moved from:** Brooklyn,
New York**Favorite Village Activity:**
Basketball

play anymore. We also played a good amount of handball and stickball."

When he wasn't on the blacktop, Levy enjoyed watching early NBA players like Willis Reed.

"Those Knicks teams were special," he said. "I really loved the way they played. I remember when they won their first championship in 1970 — it was one of the biggest things to happen in New York at the time. It was a very special moment."

When it was time to enter the workforce, Levy took to the Garment District in New York City — considered by some as one of the biggest fashion capitals of the world.

"I worked for various clothing

companies, where we converted yarn into fabric," he said. "The Garment District is a place where you can find anyone who has to do with fashion. It was a good life — it was fast, but it was good."

Working in a fast-paced environment was perfect for Levy. But as market trends in the fashion industry shifted, Levy began to look at other options.

"As time went on, production went overseas," he said. "I was getting older, and I knew it would be hard for me to find a job, so that's when my wife and I made the decision to move to The Villages."

Moving to Florida's Friendliest Hometown in 2004 turned out to be one of the best decisions Levy has made.

"I love how clean the area is," he said. "That's the first thing you'll notice once you get here — it's hard not to. The Villages does a great job keeping the place clean for residents and attractive for outsiders who might be interested in coming here."

He kept busy as a lobby host for 10 years, but that didn't stop him from finding his niche in the community's club landscape. He started The Villages Men's Basketball Club.

"The Villages has something for everyone. When I first got here there wasn't any basketball, so the recreation department told me how to get interest, and that's what I did when I started up The

Villages Men's Basketball Club. We lost some guys over the years, but I'm happy with the overall growth, and I hope to continue to see it grow long after I'm gone."

Levy has seen all levels of basketball in his lifetime, and he is happy to see that residents in The Villages are just as passionate about the game. Recently, Levy was present for the return of 3-on-3 basketball in the Senior Games. He saw various teams from The Villages and the surrounding area compete for bragging rights, and he hopes to see that format return permanently to the Senior Games docket.

"I think as time goes on, we'll see more teams from The Villages compete in the Senior Games," he said. "It was still a great day nevertheless. I'm still so passionate about basketball, and I see that same passion in others."