

**Clarence Leonidas Fender W6DOE \*1909-1991\*** The story of a ordinary young man smitten by the radio bug leaving the world an incredible legacy. Leo's parents were operators of a successful orange grove near Anaheim, Calif. He loved music and played saxophone in the high school band, but preferred the sound of stringed instruments, their harmonics and tonal variations.



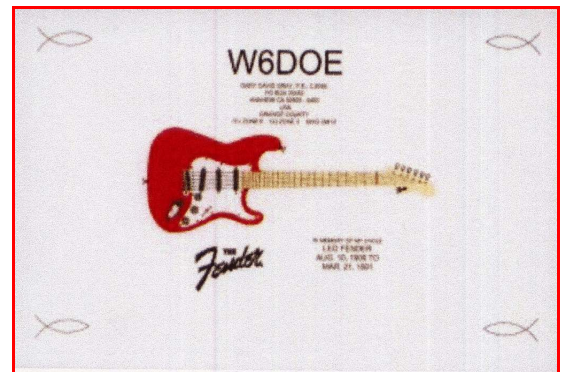
While still in grammar school at Fullerton Calif, Leo began tinkering with radios and built his first crystal receiving set. At the time, his uncle owned an auto-electric store and gave him magazines and books full of electronic experiments which the young Fender devoured.

By the time Leo graduated from Fullerton H.S. in 1928, he was hooked on electronics. He had also earned his amateur radio permit W6DOE,

building amplifiers and PA systems. He was business like and leased the audio systems to political rallies, baseball games and the entertainment events.

Fender attended Fullerton Jr College and studied accounting for two years. At one point passing his civil service he was hired by California Dept of Motor vehicles' accounting department. By 1934 Leo was married. He and Esther borrowed \$600 dollars and opened Fender's Radio Service in 1938. He had fine knowledge of electronics that really got the new business going. Soon, musicians started bringing their amplifiers for him to repair. The more he worked on them, his interest bloomed into the musical amplification field. He was convinced he could greatly improve their circuitry. Gradually, Leo began to build amplifiers on a custom-order basis. The musicians were enamored with the Fender quality he gave them.

During WW2 Leo met Clayton Orr "Doc" Kauffman an inventor and lap steel player, who was associated with Rickenbacker Guitars, a company that had been building and selling lap steel guitars for a decade. Fenders new pickup and first guitar was in motion with a narrow body almost plank like and a fretted neck, it sounded so great that several local musicians asked if they could borrow it. A patent for the pickup was granted. Due to continued growth their business re-located to larger premises and under the name of K&F. Its location was near the old orchard home of the Fender family.



By this time, Leo had dedicated himself to working with electric guitars and amplifiers. Doc had decided that there was no future there and left the business in 1946, leaving Fender to go it alone. Now that Leo was the sole owner of the company, he renamed his operation the Fender Electric Instrument Co. The Fender products became legendary with another partner and there were many inventions introduced. During old age Leo suffered several small strokes and progressive problems with Parkinson's, Leo was dedicated and continued working every day he was able, sometimes seven days a week. He died March 21, 1991 He was inducted into the Cleveland Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 1992 and presented a Technical Grammy Award in 2009. The Rock Hall stated "Rock and Roll as we know it could not exist without Leo Fender.

Though Leo took piano lessons in younger days and played sax, he never learned how to play guitar. W8SU - 2013 credit Frank Stroupe of Free Information Society and Stagebeat dot comm Fender guitars.