

Hyman Levine's ancestors can be traced back to a shtetl either in Russia or Ukraine in the 17th century. According to family legend, Hyman's mother Annie Kitchener (Savitcky), escaped Russia with her first husband, newly married and pregnant. She was 18 at the time. He was shot and killed by Russian border guards, but she escaped on a ship that brought her to Cardiff (she thought she had landed in New York). She somehow found a cousin who knew of a recently widowed man, Reuben Levine (Levy) who had a young daughter Rachel who was blind and a young son David. Their mother Minnie nee Fine had died in 1910. Reuben was aged forty-six, twenty-two years older than Annie when they married in 1910 in Cardiff.

When Reuben was twenty-four, he married Minnie Fine who was twenty on 24 August 1892 at the synagogue in Glasgow. Reuben's surname is given as Levy and his father Hyman Levy a wine and spirit merchant. Reuben and Minnie's first child Rachel was born in Glasgow on 18 June 1898.

In the 1911 Census, Reuben and Annie were living at 38 Augusta Street, Roath in Cardiff. Reuben is listed as a dealer and Annie is taking care of Reubens children from his first marriage, Rachel aged 13 and David aged 6. Their oldest son Hymie is listed as 3 months old.

Hymie was the first born in 1911 followed by Morris in 1912, Lena in 1914, Minnie in 1915, Hetty in 1920 and Golda in 1922. The family originally grew up in a large, rented house in Cardiff but Reuben was not a well man and the family moved to a mining village Abertridwr in Caerphilly. Here Annie and her daughters made a living repairing the miners' clothes and selling the odd garment. During the war, the family moved back to Cardiff where Hymie's sister Hetty, when she was nineteen, initially drove double decker buses before working in a tank shell factory.

Hymie married Lilian Jacobs in Cardiff in 1936 and their son Michael was born 5 December 1937 in Cannock, Staffordshire. In 1939 the family were living at 48 Market Street, Hednesford in Cannock where Hymie is listed as running a general draper's shop. Hymie initially joined the British Army and he then transferred to the RAF in 1939.