



George Schwartzman

GEORGE SCHWARTZMAN was born in Buffalo, New York in 1945 to Nathan and Geraldine Schwartzman. His paternal grandparents were in the *schmatte*, or textile, business in Lexington, although his family was familiar in other industries, as well, such as the practice of kosher butchering. Because his father was an avid supporter of the University of Kentucky, George was a lifelong Wildcat. He knew he wanted to go to college at UK, which he did from 1963–1967 earning a bachelor's degree in industrial administration.

"UK is special, and I think what makes UK special--Lexington's a great town, it's not overwhelming in size, it's a beautiful city, I mean, in terms of the old--and I'm now really appreciating the old houses and the old architecture and, um, it's just a--you don't appreciate it when you're younger, but you appreciate it when you've been away."

George was a member of Zeta Beta Tau, the Jewish fraternity at the University of Kentucky. He also served for a year as the president of the campus Hillel. During school, George had extended family in Lexington, so he joined them for Shabbat dinners and Passover seders in addition to other Jewish holiday celebrations. Looking back on his Hillel presidency, he recalls,

"Well, I've always been a sort of leader type person... I became president of Hillel for a year, and... I think we had events like once a month,... as I recall, they were held at the temple on Ashland Avenue here in Lexington, and one big

event they had every year was, we had a Sunday brunch at Keeneland. I remember going to those, and I met a lot of people... The Jewish population here was small, but there were the regulars who came."

The organization also gave him the opportunity to build onto his leadership skills.

"There was a leadership class, a two-hour leadership class on campus, and heads of organizations were invited to this class. And I remember going to it, and if I'm not mistaken, and I could be wrong, but Steve Beshear, who's the governor, might have been in that class... Here I was, president of a small little group, and I'm with these kind of people, you know. It was great."

After college, George moved to Orange County, California for work as a medical supplies salesman. In his first couple decades in that part of southern California in the 1970s and 1980s, he saw a massive boom in the Jewish population there, going from about 7,000 people to about 100,000 people and from only two or three local synagogues to about twenty.

During the gubernatorial recall election in 2003, George ran for governor of California — the race Arnold Schwarzenegger went on to win. He jokes that although he came in ninth in that election, he earned the most votes of any of the "no name" candidates on the ballot.