



Erle Levy

ERLE LEVY was born in 1934 in Lexington, Kentucky. In the 1930s and early 1940s, his father, Hyman Levy, was in the poultry business. Erle's mother was Pauline Levy, whose parents owned Phillip Gall's. Originally a second-hand store on Water Street, Gall's grew into a well-known Lexington outdoor gear store. In the 1940s, Erle's father opened a Main Street barbecue restaurant. Erle recalls that, as a child during World War II, he would ferry chickens from a wholesale meat market a few blocks away back to the restaurant in a little red wagon.

Erle's family was unusual among Jewish Lexingtonians in that they belonged to both of its congregations: Temple Adath Israel and Ohavay Zion Synagogue. Erle attended Sunday school at the Temple and Hebrew school at Ohavay Zion. His maternal grandparents, Phillip and Rose Gall, emphasized the importance of being Jewish, and their influence remains with Erle to this day.

"I just think Jewish life, marrying somebody Jewish, having kids that are Jewish is important. My grandmother is in my head telling me that."

Erle attended the University of Kentucky from 1951 through 1955, majoring in commerce. He was a member of the Jewish fraternity Zeta Beta Tau and was involved with the campus Hillel.

The fraternity had a strong impact on Erle's Jewish identity. He underscores this impact: "In Lexington, I only had three or four Jewish friends. So that was a big deal to have that many guys that could be friends. And then the sorority, the girls were from out of town, except for one or two. So it was more of a Jewish life than you really had. Jewish life in a way that you're doing things with Jewish people."

The main highlight of his college life, however, was meeting his wife, Sara. They met while Erle was a freshman and Sara was still a high school student in Williamson, West Virginia.

Unbeknownst to Erle, Sara had come to UK in order to be near him, and strategically pursued him. They married immediately after Erle graduated, in January of 1955.



The UK Hillel Foundation in 1953. Erle is in the back row. His future sister-in-law, Sonia--who introduced Erle to her sister, Sara-- is in front.

By the time Erle was a student at UK, his father owned a Howard Johnson Motor Lodge, and Erle worked there throughout his college years. After college, he continued working for his father in rental properties, and got into the business of building houses, and he stayed involved in the housing business for the next several decades. Eventually, Erle and two business partners bought Kentucky Lighting and Supply (KLS). Erle bought out his partners around 2000, and remains KLS's president.

Erle and Sara raised four children, and like Erle's parents, they were involved in both Temple Adath Israel and Ohavay Zion Synagogue. Now that their children have grown up, however, Erle and Sara no longer belong to the Temple, though they remain active members of Ohavay Zion.