



John Yarmuth

JOHN YARMUTH was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1947. His father, Stanley, met his mother Edna (nee Klein) when he came to train at Fort Knox during World War II. After the war, Stanley settled in Kentucky where he built a small car lot business into National Industries. Although John's family was more culturally Jewish than observant, John grew up in the predominantly Jewish neighborhood of the Upper Highlands in Louisville. He participated in sports and social clubs at the Jewish Community Center and the Standard Club, in part due to limited Jewish participation in student clubs at Atherton High School where he enrolled:

"I don't remember any Jewish kid being asked to join any of the... 'literary societies' in high school at the time... I was actually asked to join one... and it was highly unusual... but I was in Pi Tau Pi, and, uh, which was actually a national Jewish high school fraternity. And I didn't want really to be the only Jew in-- (laughs)-- the other ones."

However, as he rose in high school, John was elected to Atherton's student council as first vice president and then president. He then attended Yale University from 1965 to 1969.

"...one of the pivotal moments in my life at Yale was--and this is my freshman year, again, and this is probably the beginning of my turning point from being, basically, following my father's politics to becoming much more left. Uh, there was a--a famous debate on campus, famous in the Yale world, in 1966,

between William Sloane Coffin and William F. Buckley, Jr.... And so I went to this debate rooting for William F. Buckley, because I had read Buckley, and again, I was probably inclined to his philosophical position. And I just said, well, Buckley's so smart, he's gonna eat this guy up, this William Sloane Coffin guy, whom I didn't really know much about. Well... Sloane Coffin destroyed Buckley... it was not even close. Sloane was so, so bright."

After college, John worked for Republican U.S. Senator Marlow Cook for several years before returning to Kentucky. With increasing influence of evangelicals in the Reagan administration, in 1985 John changed his partisanship to the Democratic Party. From the 1970s til 1982, he edited and published *Louisville Today* and then founded the alternative weekly *Louisville Eccentric Observer* in 1990. John was known for balancing his liberal editorials with conservative voices. In 2006, John was elected to represent Kentucky's 3rd Congressional District. He became Kentucky's first Jewish Representative and is currently Kentucky's only Democratic congressperson. John has remained committed to his key campaign issues:

"...there were three things I wanted to do when I got to Congress. One was to get money out of politics, one was to achieve universal health care, a third was to get stronger gun laws."