



Judy Saxe

JUDY SAXE was born Beverly Judith Shapiro in 1935 in Madison, Wisconsin. The daughter of Leila Sinai-ko, a physical education teacher from Wisconsin, and David Shapiro, a rabbi from Jerusalem, Saxe's family ties to Israel both before and after it became a state were influential in shaping her Jewish life.

In high school, Judy joined Young Judaea, a Zionist youth organization, through which she went to Israel for the first time in 1952. Judy attributes her decision to attend Brandeis University to its strong reputation in the Jewish community in Florida. After her sophomore year at Brandeis, Judy took a year off for work study in Israel through the Jewish Agency as a representative of Brandeis's Student Zionist Organization. She continued this work for two years under the American Zionist Youth Commission back in the United States while finishing her degree at Brandeis.

"Boston has tens of universities and colleges, and thousands and thousands of Jewish students, so we ran some educational programs...we partnered with the Boston University Hillel, and ran a number of holiday programs, Chanukah and Purim...and we did some of the same thing at Harvard Hillel.."

During her work on these campus outreach programs, Judy met her husband, Stanley, who was a dental student at Harvard University at the time. In 1962, Stanley joined the opening faculty of the University of Kentucky's College of Dentistry, so the Saxes moved from Washington to Kentucky. Judy became a pivotal figure in several Jewish organizations, including Ohavay Zion Synagogue, Hadassah and the Lexington Havurah. She helped establish Young Judaea programs for Jewish children of different age groups and is credited with increasing adult participation in Lexington's local Hadassah chapter.

"...what I found in Lexington...were country clubs that were restricted, but what I found in terms of our day to day life, the people we met and in the schools where my kids went...was more interest in what it was to be Jewish, because they had never met Jewish people before"

To this day, the Lexington Hadassah chapter has a disproportionately large representation at the national level, due in part to Judy's high profile contributions to the organization. She appreciated that as the women's movement emerged in the United States in the 1970s,

"Hadassah really went along with it. So, a lot of my um, evolution in terms of feminism...my own personal feminism really came through Hadassah. We had a great women's discussion group here for many years, we had some really interesting seminars on a regional level, and then I went to my first national convention in 1971 — I think it must have been 1971. And that was not only because it was a very exciting, you know, really to see thousands of women, and all working for the same thing, but, you know, just by chance, met people who had connections to my family."