



C. L. Max Nikias
President

May 8, 2012

Robert C. Packard
President's Chair

Malcolm R. Currie Chair
in Technology
and the Humanities

Dear USC community,

With tremendous sadness, I am writing to announce the passing of our dear friend and USC Life Trustee **Kenneth Leventhal**, a legendary leader in the fields of accounting and real estate. Ken died this morning in Los Angeles at the age of 90.

Ken was truly an extraordinary individual and the conscience of the university. His kindness, generosity, and warmth will always be remembered. He will be missed by the entire Trojan Family.

Ken Leventhal was chairman emeritus of the Ernst & Young Kenneth Leventhal Real Estate Group, and the venerable namesake of the USC Elaine and Kenneth Leventhal School of Accounting.

For more than four decades, Dr. Leventhal remained dedicated to the enrichment of our beloved university, its faculty, and students. He served on the USC Board of Trustees since 1977, participating on its executive, finance, development, audit, and personnel committees.

He was a gifted businessman, as well as a passionate Trojan. With boundless energy, dedication, and hard work, he provided the leadership for two of USC's transformative fundraising campaigns. His legacy is both extraordinary and assured, having enriched the lives of everyone at USC.

Dr. Leventhal earned his B.S. in business administration and accounting from the University of California, Los Angeles, and his Certified Public Accountant designation from the State of California in 1948. He later taught part-time at USC, where accounting has been an integral part of the business curriculum since 1920.

As Dr. Leventhal's involvement with USC deepened, he became a member of the donor financial planning committee for USC's \$309 million Toward Century II fundraising campaign, which ran from 1976 to 1981. In 1979, his financial support provided a significant impetus for the establishment of a dedicated school of accounting at USC.

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In 1993, he took up the mantle of national chair for an even more ambitious development effort, the Building on Excellence campaign.

Raising the bar high for trustees and other campaign donors, Dr. Leventhal and his wife, Elaine Otter Leventhal, bequeathed \$15 million to USC's accounting school in 1995. At the time, their gift was largest ever made to an accounting program. The school was renamed in their honor the following year, and the couple augmented their original gift with an additional \$10 million pledge in 2002.

The campaign concluded that same year, having raised a record \$2.85 billion. At the time, it was the most successful fundraising campaign in the history of American higher education.

The seeds of Dr. Leventhal's distinguished career were sown during childhood, when, as a 10 year-old, he took on a paper route for the *Herald-Express*. His route manager, who was enrolled in a correspondence course in accounting, told the young Dr. Leventhal that all an accountant needed to go into business was a pencil. Convinced that he could always earn a nickel to buy a pencil, Dr. Leventhal set out to become an accountant.

After serving in the United States Army during World War II, he attended UCLA on the G.I. Bill. There, he met and married a classmate, Elaine, and in 1949, the couple launched an accounting business in their rented apartment, armed with little more than pencils and a 10-key electric adding machine.

By 1995, when it merged with Ernst & Young, Kenneth Leventhal & Company—specializing in complex real estate situations—ranked as the ninth-largest certified public accounting firm in the country and had 13 offices nationwide. The firm's international affiliate, Clark Kenneth Leventhal & Company, had become the 12th-largest accounting firm in the world.

Dr. Leventhal served on the Senior Council, which is the governing body of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and as director of the California Society of Certified Public Accountants. He led numerous symposia in both the accounting and real estate fields, and contributed articles to a variety of professional publications, including *Professional Builder* magazine.

At USC, he also served on the boards of councilors of the USC Marshall School of Business and the USC Leventhal School of Accounting. He was a member of USC Associates, USC Accounting Circle, and USC Accounting Associates.

In addition to their namesake school, the Leventhals extended their support to the John R. Hubbard Chair in History at the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, as well as to the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, the USC Davis School of Gerontology, the USC Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, the USC Libraries, and the Doheny Eye Institute.

In recognition of their many contributions to the university, Elaine and Kenneth Leventhal were awarded honorary doctor of humane letters degrees from USC in 2000. In 2004, Dr. Leventhal received USC's highest honor, the Presidential Medallion.

Ken is survived by his wife of 63 years, Elaine; his brother Henley; his son Ross and daughter-in-law Mary Jo; his son Robert; and one granddaughter, Emma. USC will host a celebration of Ken's life in the early fall. Our hearts and thoughts are with Elaine and the entire Leventhal family during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. L. Max Nikias". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

C. L. Max Nikias
President