

# Getting to Know Floyd Stern....

## Tell us about your family:

I was born in Chicago, IL, but I grew up in Miami Beach, FL. My family moved to Florida when I was entering seventh grade. We moved on the recommendation of my Dad's cardiologist. Dad had rheumatic valvular heart disease, a complication of acute rheumatic fever from his early childhood. I attended Junior and Senior High School in Miami Beach, the city I call my hometown. It was a great place to be and live in the late 1950's. I have many wonderful friends from that period of my life.



My parents were Maxine Kaplan Stern and Danny Stern. I believe I “won the parent lottery.” They were nurturing, supportive, and open-minded people who gave their children the belief that they could achieve everything in life that they set their mind to. They made many sacrifices for their children.

My mother was a woman who had great people skills and was the life of the party. She could swear “like a sailor,” but most people thought she had developed it to an art form. She was open-minded about everything...sex, racial relations, etc. There wasn't a prejudiced bone in her body.

My father was quieter and more intellectual, widely read. Friends and business associates would frequently solicit his views on varying subjects, personal problems, business problems, etc.

I have one brother George, 6 1/2 years younger than me. George was the resident genius of the family, learned to read, self-taught by the age of 3, and learned bridge when he was 11

years old, by watching people play. As a child, he believed adults (including teachers) were just larger people. This caused him a lot of problems, and my parents, particularly my mother, a lot of aggravation.

I liked my grandparents but they didn't have a profound effect on me. My maternal grandfather George Kaplan was an artist, a painter, and actually supported his family that way. His wife, Jeanette Vision, was a classical bubba, superstitious, and a beauty queen, but I don't know much about her, really. My paternal grandparents were Max and Dora. Max was the son the son of a Moscow butcher who immigrated to the US at age 3. He became a businessman, manufacturing novelty art, mostly Christian art that my father built and took to a new level. His wife Dora, was from Lithuania. I don't know much about her, really. Initially, they didn't approve of my mother, but she straightened them out, fast.

Maybe the most impressive of my extended family was my Dad's older brother Eddie. He was a very successful bookmaker who owned a boat and a home in Palm Island, Miami Beach before the age of 30. He had no children of his own, but he lavished me with gifts, including a dog. He loved dogs and children.

I had a very happy childhood, but I had a problem...I was a terrible stutterer. This problem dominated my life until maybe the middle of high school. But I was an excellent student and a good athlete, so these things compensated.

My years in Miami Beach were wonderful. I went to Nautilus Junior High and Miami Beach Senior High. Although it was a public high school, it was perhaps like what a good IB School is now. The demographic was unusual, 95% of the students were Jewish. 95% of the graduating class went to college at a time when 35% nationally attended college. The kids were clamoring to get into extracurricular activities to build up their college resumes. In spite of the fact that there was a lot of competition, most of the kids got along really well. I made some great friends in high school that I am friendly with and involved with to this very day.

A story: When I went to college, I met many other guys, mainly from the South.

They were talking about hunting and fishing. They quickly realized that I knew nothing about hunting and just a little about fishing. When they asked, "What did the guys in Miami Beach do for fun," I replied, "When we got to be 16, we got fake matching ID, took Cha Cha and Mambo lessons, and went to the clubs." It was hunting, just a different type.

We had high school fraternities and sororities that were “off campus”, but “Beach High” administration approved them. The local YMHA sponsored these clubs. My fraternity was called Keystone. Several of my best friends, to this day, were in Keystone. We raised money one year to go for a “house party” in Havana. Imagine a group of high school boys in Havana. You will have to use your imagination, because I won’t tell you anything that happened.

I’ve been married and divorced twice. First marriage was Helen. I was 22 when I first married. My father had died recently. I guess I was filling in my spaces created by the loss of my father. We had two children together. Deborah was born in 1964 and became an air traffic controller. She was inspired about aviation when my female Jewish private investigator flew us out of California in a private plane during the divorce custody battle. Deborah never forgot the flight.



My daughter Lauren was born 7 years later in 1971. Lauren is now a mother of two and she has a Doctorate in Counseling and teaches at Longwood University in Virginia. Her children/my grandchildren are Miranda (named after my mother Maxine) and her 6-year-old brother Elliott.



I won custody of my two daughters in the divorce, an accomplishment in which I take considerable pride.

My second marriage was to Gloria Jean (Glory) O'Malley. Many of you know her. We were married for 39 years, until we couldn't be together any longer. My third daughter from this marriage is Julie, born in 1978. Julie is married to Rich Wills, owner of the Fit Niche running and fitness store in Lakeland. They have two children together, Daniel and Mila, twins who were born in Nov, 2013. They attend Sunday School at Temple Emanuel and are being raised Jewish.



Right now, I'm single. I am dating a wonderful woman, Diane Bornstein. You will hear more about her as time goes on.



#### **Education–Military Service-Work-Career:**

I served in the US Public Health Service and was assigned to the Coast Guard. I served for two years as a medical officer with a final rank of Lt. Commander. I am a patriot and very proud of my service.



I attended Tulane University where I was a psychology major with a chemistry minor (pre-med). After three years, I was accepted to the Tulane University School of Medicine. I received my Bachelor's Degree at the end of my first year of medical school. Graduated Phi Beta Kappa. I graduated medical school in 1965 with a Doctor of Medicine.



I went on to be an Otolaryngologist/Head & Neck Surgeon (ENT). I had an opportunity to buy a practice in Lakeland from a Dr. David Kenet, who was once a member of Temple Emanuel. I did a lot of plastic and cosmetic surgery and I also had a subspecialty in otolaryngic allergy with certification in the subspecialty from the AAOA. I was entrepreneurial in my practice.

In 1991, looking for new challenges, I attended the Executive MBA program at USF in Tampa. I earned my MBA in 1993. After B-School, I built up the practice. We were Central Florida ENT Associates, P.A. I recruited two younger partners. In 1998, I sold my practice to them. Doesn't every Jewish boy want to eventually sell his business?

I thought I was going to have another career as a registered investment advisor. I passed all the tests, but was diverted when I moved back to California (I had done my residency at UCLA and was in the service there) on what I call my "California adventure." I returned to Lakeland in 2010. I re-joined Temple Emanuel at that time.

### **Interests:**

Some of the books I am interested in are about the stock market and investing. The books on my nightstand include: *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman; *Why Be Jewish* by Doron Kornbluth; *A Patriot's History of the United States*.

I enjoy following what is going on in the business world and I am very interested in our country, politics, and public policy. I belong to a patriotic and Conservative group, the Winter Haven 9-12 Project. I'm the Secretary on their Board. I am also the communications person for the Beach High Class of 1958. It is a labor of love for me. I enjoy reading, music, and cultural activities such as concerts, plays, etc. I am a B'nai B'rith board member.

### **On Being Jewish:**

I have been a member of Temple Emanuel since 2010. I was a member a couple of times before that since 1972. I am currently on the Marketing Committee and will be taking over as Chair. I look forward to taking on larger role at the Temple. I would enjoy the challenge of making a contribution.

I am not particularly observant, but I have attended Friday night Shabbat services frequently over the last couple of years. I believe that for the Temple to be a success, its members need to attend services. For me, Judaism is about community. There are so few of us that it is vital

that we are cohesive and have a presence in Lakeland. Recently, my girlfriend Diane, a devout Christian, has made me more serious about my Jewish faith.

I am a big supporter of Israel. Israel is a tribute to the survival of the Jewish people and it demonstrates what freedom can achieve. I hear from my many Christian friends that "Israel is the apple of G-d's eye." I wonder why so many Jewish people cannot understand this.

## **Reflections:**

### **Who has been the biggest influence in your life?**

My parents Danny and Maxine had the biggest influence in my life for sure. As I said before, I won the "parent lottery." They taught me how to live and what to value. They taught me to be kind and to treat people the way that I would want to be treated. They taught me to fight for the principles that I believe in, and that nothing was impossible or unattainable if you are willing to work and fight for your goals and beliefs. They taught me about how important children and education were. I could go on and on. I miss them. I would give anything to spend more time with them.

My professor and chairman of my surgical residency, Dr. Paul Ward also played a huge role in my life. He was a giant in his field. I had the greatest respect for him. I want to believe that he respected me, too. He was aware that I would always tell him the truth and give him candid feedback. When you are leading an important organization, getting honest feedback isn't easy. Paul made me who I became professionally.



### **What is the one thing that people would be surprised to learn about you?**

You might be surprised to know how really sensitive I am. What surprises me about me is that I can be pretty funny.

## **What is your proudest moment?**

The proudest moment so far in my life was when I won custody of my daughters, Deborah and Lauren in my first divorce.

## **Is there anything you would do over if you had the chance?**

I can fantasize about do-overs, but I've had a great life. It's like time travel stories, if you change something, everything else is changed, so who knows where you would wind up? I wouldn't change anything. I am blessed to have three wonderful daughters, four wonderful grandchildren, and many great friends.



## **Looking back, what is the best advice you would give your younger self? What are the most important lessons you have learned in life?**

- (1) "Floyd, it's the journey, not the destination." It's OK to "futzurize," but be sure to enjoy the moment.
- (2) Try to be a better listener and a better husband.
- (3) Don't forget your friends, and be a good friend. (I have done a good job on this one).
- (4) My chief Dr. Paul Ward might have added a couple of his favorite pithy aphorisms that he taught us to apply to surgery and life: "You can't shine shit, and if you see a pile of shit and you don't want to make it bigger, don't kick it."