

## **Member Profile: In this issue we feature Temple Member Ira Serebrin.**

Read other profiles at: <https://templeemanuellakeland.com/member-profiles/>



Ira in 1975  
and more re-  
cently at his  
office on  
Combee Rd.



Fifty years ago this year, (March 1973), I graduated from the Florida State University College of Law in one of the first graduating classes from the then new law school. I proceeded to apply for jobs and was offered one at the State Attorney's office in Bartow, Florida. Having never heard of Bartow or even Lakeland for that matter, my wife and I drove down from Tallahassee to see what it looked like. I knew I wanted to practice law in Florida because I very much disliked the winters of Minnesota, where I was born, raised, and completed my undergraduate degree.

Tammy wanted to be sure there was a synagogue. It all looked good. It was near the newly opened Disney World, it looked like a nice "little" town, and it did have a synagogue. We packed our belongings in our yellow Plymouth Duster and headed to the apartment we rented on Lime Street in Lakeland and then I began working as an assistant state attorney while studying for the Florida Bar Exam. Happily, I passed the bar exam on the first attempt in July 1973 and I was inducted into the Florida Bar in October. I continued to work at the State Attorney's office for a while and had a short stint at another attorney's private practice. Then I ventured out on my own and opened my own law practice in 1975 while also moonlighting as the city public defender in night court.

I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on November 15, 1945 and lived there and then a suburb (St. Louis Park) with my parents, older sister and younger brother, all through my schooling including the University of Minnesota where I received my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. I was raised Jewish at Temple Israel, a reform synagogue in Minneapolis, where I became a bar mitzvah and was confirmed. During high school I was active in BBYO, the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization.

I had many grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins nearby with whom we spent a lot of time. My dad owned a jewelry store (where I worked many summers and holidays). I met my wife, Tammy on a "blind date" in my junior year of college. I had known for a long time that I wanted to go to law school but I also knew I did not want to go to school or live in Minnesota any longer than I had to. The Minnesota winters were not for me. So after working for a year as a cost accountant at Univac to earn some funds to pay for law school, I applied to several schools in warm weather climates and was accepted at FSU. I went there freshman year as a bachelor and came home during spring break, proposed to Tammy, we were married that September and headed down to Tallahassee together to live in married student housing, while I went to law school and she worked at the local television station. Two years later I received my law degree and we moved to Lakeland. One of the first things we did after settling in was to join Temple Emanuel and our first experience with the Temple was Rosh Hashanah 1973 – 50 years ago. We have been members ever since with both our boys becoming a bar mitzvah on the Temple Emanuel bima.

Continued on next page

In 1977 my parents and in-laws all moved to Lakeland having retired and wanting to be nearer to us and their then new grandson, Benjamin. Five years later we welcomed Jonathan into the world. Our lives remained active with jobs, kids and Temple being a big focal point. I also was an avid tennis player for many, many years, playing at least twice a week and I enjoyed playing bridge. In addition, because of Jonathan and Tammy I became involved with the community theatre and enjoyed participating in several musicals such as Annie, Oliver and Fiddler on the Roof. It was a great family activity that we all liked and I must admit I enjoyed the limelight and singing and dancing.

Over the years I have been on the board of Temple Emanuel, chaired the Polk County Rape Crisis Center, was editor of the Lakeland Bar Association newsletter and have received recognition for pro bono legal work.

As I reflect on my 50 years of practicing law and living life this is what comes to mind as my proudest and most enjoyable events:

Getting into law school, passing the Florida Bar exam on the first attempt, opening my own law practice that I have maintained for 48 years, helping many people solve their legal problems, being married to the same woman for 52 years, becoming a father and raising two super boys (Ben and Jonathan), seeing them graduate from college, get married, and giving us four wonderful grandchildren (Miriam, Zachary, Ellie and Hannah).

Practicing law has been the joy of my life second only to my family and I have no intention of retiring any time soon.

Some favorites:

Books -- Sherlock Holmes

Movies - James Bond

TV shows - Hill Street Blues and Seinfeld

Food - anything at Bern's Steakhouse

Happiest moments – being with my family and working in my office

