

**Monthly Profile: This month we feature office volunteer and Board Member Joan Greenbaum. Thanks Joan!** Read other profiles at: <https://templemanuelakeland.com/member-profiles/>

I was born in Tampa but moved to Lakeland when I was two.

Both of my parents were immigrants. My mother came to the United States as a child from Russia. She always said she was from Kiev, but I found out that she was actually from a small town, a “Shtetl”, in the Ukraine. Her father was a “Shochet”, (a person officially certified as competent to kill cattle and poultry in the manner prescribed by Jewish law), and very religious. My mother idolized him, but he died when she was young. My mother, grandmother, sister and two brothers then came to the United States. My mother went to work to help support her family when she was very young.

My father was from Worms, Germany where his family owned a leather goods business. He went to private schools. He and his father were taken to what he called a “Brown House” by the Nazis, but they were able to escape and go to Palestine. My mother went to Palestine too, with Golda Meir and a Zionist group. She met my father and they married in Israel.



My parents came from very different backgrounds, but they both spoke Yiddish. My oldest brother Joseph (Joe) was born in Israel and my mother was pregnant with my sister when she was told she had to return to the United States or she would lose her US citizenship.

After sitting in the consulate's office in Israel all day with my four year old brother and pregnant with my sister she was able to get my father papers to come with her to the United States.

She was nine months pregnant with my sister when she returned to the US. My sister and younger brother were born in Brooklyn, New York. My parents and siblings moved to Hicksville, Long Island, New York. My father was drafted into the Army and wounded in WWII. That was the last time he went to Germany.

After my father was wounded our family had to move to a warmer climate. They moved to Gainesville and then Tampa. My mother was active at the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue. My father attended the University of Tampa and then graduated from the University of Florida. He always wanted to be an attorney, but he graduated with a degree in Agriculture.

My parents lost a child before me and I was a premature baby. My mother gave me three Hebrew names because she didn't know if I was going to live or not. It is miraculous that I did make it and had no issues because I was born weighing three pounds. That was seventy years ago.

My sister, Korina Masters lives in Lakeland. My brother Joseph Greenbaum lives with his wife Helga in Mountain House, California. My brother Melvin passed away in 2008.

I did not have interaction with family other than my nuclear family. I never knew my father's family growing up. When I was a teenager, he found out he had a cousin in Philadelphia. His family lived in Israel. At the present time I do have a cousin from his family living in New Jersey.

My mother's family were all in New York. I can remember when I was a child that my grandmother came for a visit one time. My siblings left home by the time I was in Junior High. A lot of my friends thought that I was an only child.

Growing up in Lakeland was hard. My parents were immigrants, both had accents, they were older than most parents of kids my age, and they were not Americanized. We lived on the east side of town where only one other Jewish family lived. I went to Sunday School and Hebrew School at Temple Emanuel. I did not have a Bat Mitzvah because I didn't want to sing in front of a crowd. I didn't feel as if I fit in with the other kids in the religious school because I didn't go to the same primary schools that they did or live near them. I had close friends where I lived and they all knew that I was Jewish and accepted that.

After sixth grade when I was 11 years old, my mother put me on a bus to go stay with my brother in California. She wanted me to get to know my brother. He left home when I was very young. After that she would put me on a bus or take me to my sister's in Massachusetts almost every summer. I loved going to my sister's because I made friends with other girls there and my sister would take me to the beaches in New Hampshire and Maine.

My mother ran a new and used store on North Florida Ave., Lillian's Bargain Store. At that time there were several Jewish merchants on North Florida Ave. She closed the store after my father began working for the USDA and she experienced health issues. My father began working for the USDA when I was in Junior High. In ninth and tenth grade I started the school years in other states and learned to be independent at an early age. I went off to the University of Florida at seventeen where I met my ex-husband the summer after my freshman year. He had just gotten out of the Marines and was back from Vietnam.

The fall after my sophomore year I dropped out of college and ran off and got married. My husband was not Jewish and my parents said they would consider me dead. My father later contacted me to tell me that my mother was sick and I should bring my husband and come see her. I did.

I went back to college and had my first child, Michelle, while my husband and I were still in school. I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. I supported the family for a year.

My ex-husband got his first job in Clewiston, Fl. When we went to look for a home we discovered that the principal, assistant principal and secretary had all left the school he was supposed to be working at. We returned to Lakeland and he got a job at Santa Fe High School.

I became a member of Temple Emanuel in 1976. When my children were small my husband converted to Judaism and we remarried at Temple Emanuel. I went to work as a paraprofessional for the school system. I left that job due to pregnancy issues. I was working on the Physical Education field, but the principal would not accommodate me. I lost the baby shortly after that. I then became pregnant again. Six weeks after my son Jason was born, I went to work at Polk County Social Services. My husband went to work for the Polk County Schools.

My mother died in 1976, six months after I started working. I was 26 years old. I worked at Polk County Social Services for five and half years. Then I went to work for the state. I worked as a Social Worker for a program called the Pentastar Project, where I had forty caseloads. These clients would normally go to a nursing home. I was their case manager making sure that they got care in their homes. The state abandoned the project, which by the way was successful and saved the state money by not paying for nursing homes for these clients.



At the 70th birthday party for high school class. Part of my Sunday School class. From left to right, Michael Schneider, David Stone, myself and Todd Estroff.

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Deadline for the next Menorah is November 30, 2020. Do you want to be our next profile? Please send inquiries, info, articles, images, comments, etc. to [irmacole26@gmail.com](mailto:irmacole26@gmail.com)



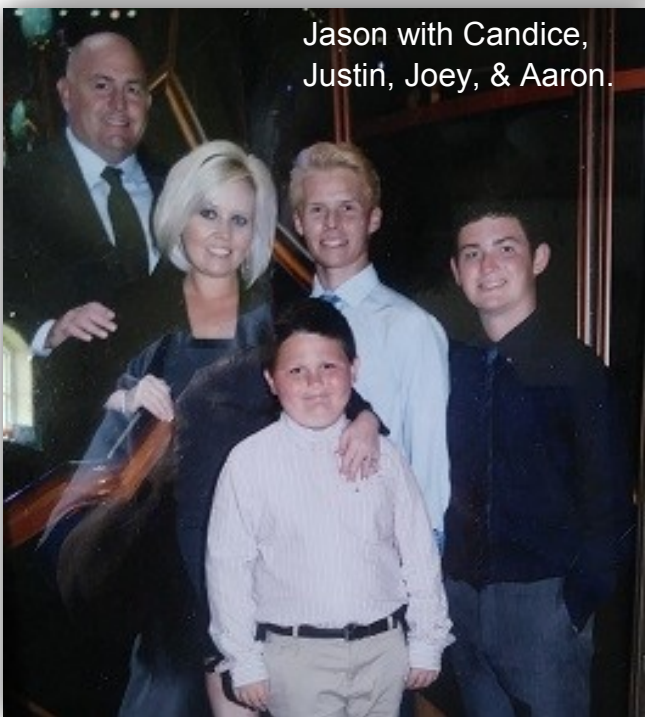
Bar Mitzvah at the old Temple: Korina, Melvin, parents Lillian & Herman, & Joan



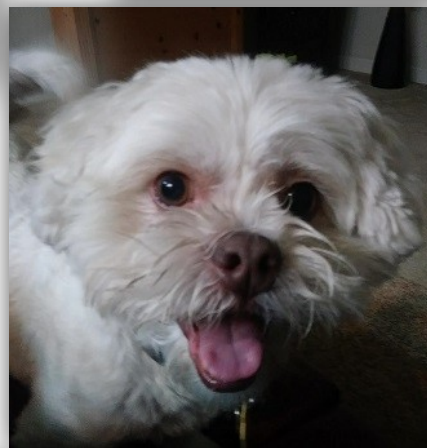
Brother Joe's wedding to Helga 62 years ago! Joan with parents, Korina & Melvin.



Joan with son Jason & daughter Michelle



Jason with Candice, Justin, Joey, & Aaron.



Above the 5 grands!  
Left Lewey  
Below Michelle & family: Brad, Taylor and Maddie.



I then went to work in Foster Care and then Aging and Adult Services. I handled adult abuse and neglect cases. Then I went to work at the courthouse as a Counselor/Investigator doing paternity and modification cases. Allen Shane came to our office to do the HLA blood work for paternity testing. During that time my father, who was also a member of Temple Emanuel, lived with my family. He died in 1987 when I was 37. I divorced at age 39 in 1989.

When the funding was stopped for the Paternity Project, my boss, coworker and I developed a program to enforce child support and alimony cases for people in Polk County. People got court orders to see me regarding their delinquencies. I also became a certified Family Mediator. I did that job for over fourteen years and I loved it. I learned to be more aggressive and assertive. The job ended because of budget cuts. So then I went to work in Domestic Violence. I retired and went back to work part time there for nine more years. I retired once again after being given an ultimatum to either work full time or you are out of here.

My children are married and I have five grandchildren. Michelle (Oliver) is a Realtor with Coldwell Banker and her husband Brad is VP of nonperishable items for Publix. My oldest grandchild, Taylor is starting her second year at U of F law school. Maddie, her sister, is attending Polk State College and works at Publix on 540A. The girls are Michelle's children.

My son, Jason (Dougherty) is the Deputy Chief at Hillsborough County Fire Rescue. His wife Candice, is a Nail Tech. His son Justin is at Collegiate High School and also works at Publix on 540A. His son Joey is at Lakeland Highlands Middle School and his stepson Aaron (Curtis) attends Gateway High School and works at Publix on Shepard Road.

So if anyone goes to any of these Publix stores say 'Hi!' to them and tell them that you know me. You may also see Jason on TV at times. Jason and Michelle attended Sunday and Hebrew School at Temple Emanuel. They were both confirmed and had their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs at Temple Emanuel. I am very proud of my children and grandchildren. They are all successful and live wholesome lives.

I travel with a college friend usually twice a year. We both love to dance. We do things like we did in college. I used to read a lot but after college it seems the only time I read is when I am on vacation. When at home I feel I need to take care of what needs to be done. My new dog, Lewey, keeps me busy. I walk him at least twice a day and try to keep him out of trouble.

Retirement has been hard for me. I found that I need to be productive and like to be around people. After my divorce I met lots of great people and traveled to many places. Volunteering at the synagogue has helped fill my retirement void. I am still searching for an answer to "What do I want to do when I grow up?"

Judaism plays an important part in my life. I believe it gave me the foundation to be a better person. I have helped others throughout my life and tried to treat others with respect. I learned that from my parents and Judaism. My family has been members of Temple Emanuel since 1951. I moved to the Orlando area for four years but kept my membership. Temple Emanuel has been a constant in my life.

My mother was very traditional but at times did things because that is what she grew up doing, not giving a reason for doing those things. My father always said "You need to keep a good name." I do believe my father was my biggest positive influence in my life. He always took the high road. I learned perseverance from my mother. My mother was street smart.

Looking back on my life I realize that being loyal and not wanting to give up can sometimes be detrimental. One needs to realize that it is okay at times to let something or someone go. At times you need to stand up for yourself. After completing and reviewing this profile I feel that my life has had a lot of sad moments but I am blessed with a lot of "nachas" as well.

Shalom to my friends at Temple Emanuel.