

Monthly Profile: This month we feature Mavra Kear! Read her interesting story here and more member profiles at: <https://templeemanuellakeland.com/member-profiles/>

Where did you grow up?



I am Florida-born (Miami). My brother, Kenneth, was born 16 months later and then my father transferred from Army Reserves to active duty and we started traveling. His first assignment, much to the alarm of my grandparents, was Germany. Returning to the States about a year later, the family returned to Tampa (near my mother's parents) while Dad served a tour in Viet Nam. My kindergarten, Seaborn Day School on Davis Island, is still there! I went to first grade in El Paso, Texas and second grade in Ft. Greely, Alaska. This tiny post is 100 miles north of Fairbanks. I loved the parka that my mother made. Dad showed us how to make snow angels. He also made a time lapse photo of the four hours of sunlight one winter day. If bison wandered near the playground, my brother and I were allowed to go into a neighbor's house without asking permission first. The memories of a 7-year old are interesting.

Mavra and brother Ken in parkas!

I started third grade in Ft. Greely, but Dad got orders to go back to Viet Nam. The family moved to Satellite Beach, Florida where there was spare housing back in our home state. I remember standing on the beach with Mom and Ken to watch Apollo 15 go up. Dad returned safely and we moved to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas where I finished fourth and fifth grades. The Army allowed 30 days leave for a change of station. We had a pop-up tent and camped across the country, enjoying the sights.

The next assignment was Key West. We detoured to Indianapolis for the summer while Dad attended an executive officer training program. We lived in our new camper – a full 25 feet with walls, oven, and shower for the four of us. Around this time the Army figured out that moving thousands of families from one end of the country to the other every year was not cost effective. We lived in Key West for three years; my entire junior high school in one place. Then, four years of high school in West Springfield, Virginia. To me, that was our biggest environment change, moving from small, easy-going Key West to Washington, D.C. metropolis. I returned to our home state for college at the University of Florida and my brother had to split high school to finish his last two years in Junction City, Kansas (Ft. Riley). Dad retired from the military two years later and my parents have lived south of Tampa ever since.

Where did you go to school-college-degree-major?

My mother flew with me from Kansas to UF. I moved into the residence hall, Mom left, and there I was at my parent's alma mater with 35,000 peers. I didn't know a single soul. Due to high enrollment, I was in a "triple" with two 'JAPs' (Jewish American Princess) from Miami. Talk about culture shock.

I contemplated joining the military. It is probably fortunate that I realized immediately that I was lousy at following orders without question. I considered medical school, but thought the schedule sounded terrible. I settled on nursing school "because I can do that anywhere I live."



I worked as a registered nurse in Gainesville for about a year before starting a Master's degree to become a Nurse Practitioner. I wanted the independence compared to an RN. I met my husband, Clay, at a single professionals mixer and we married in 1989.

After working at a few different clinics in Gainesville, Brandon, and Bartow, I decided to open my own medical office in Lakeland. To help pay the bills in those early months, I taught part time at Florida Southern College. It turns out I enjoyed teaching more than being a business owner. I needed a doctorate to be a professor, so I closed my office and then, while teaching full time and working two part time Nurse Practitioner jobs, I attended University of South Florida and earned a PhD in Nursing.

I taught nursing for a total 17 years, rising from adjunct professor to Director of Nursing at Florida Southern before being lured to Polk State College to open their Bachelor's in Nursing program. I was always active in the Florida Nurses Association and while at Polk State I was elected FNA President. By the end of the two year term, I was tired of academia and ready to return to clinical practice.

I now work one job only and love it. I provide primary care services at Peace River Center, a community mental health organization. My patients are indigent and marginalized. I am rewarded by at least one patient every day telling me how much they appreciate the time I spend with them. Many have gone without care for years and have complex health problems. I cherish their trust. Every day is different and requires a lot of thinking and creative problem solving.

Who are/were your siblings, parents, and grandparents and what affect did they have on the person you have become? What does being Jewish mean to you?

I have the luxury to look back now and bask in the enjoyment of a stable, happy nuclear family. My mother grew up in Tampa and father in Miami, each surrounded by their conservative Jewish families. My grandfathers both were business owners as well as active in local and regional B'nai B'rith and Jewish Federation. My grandmothers worked along side them.

My parents always framed our moving positively. It was an opportunity see our country. Leaving friends was natural; so was making new friends. Living in a new home was a time to clean out drawers and re-decorate. This foundation made me resilient and an optimist. I believe this is also a reflection of our Ashkenazi Jewish heritage. I am third generation American. Grandma and Grandpa Hurwitz emigrated from Lithuania as children.

Because my family lived mostly on small Army posts, my father served as the lay leader for religious services. When we were near a temple, I attended Sunday School, otherwise Mom taught us. I remember Hebrew class with my brother in Key West. I chose not to have a Bat Mitzvah service there, but had a confirmation service at Fort Belvoir, Virginia where my brother celebrated his Bar Mitzvah service. (See photo – I just got contact lenses and my braces are off!)



My parents instilled a strong religious and cultural connection to Judaism. Attending Friday night services and observing holiday rituals was part of our routine. I carried on that routine at college, attending Friday dinner and services at Hillel. As a college senior I served on the Hillel Board and then continued on as a community member of the Board for a few years.

I have been a member of Temple Emanuel since moving to Lakeland in 1995. Admittedly, I am a far more active congregant in recent years. I believe this is due to life cycle timing, but I give some credit to Rabbi Goldstein and his engaging manner and emphasis on inclusiveness.

I am an in-between age at our Temple. I arrived here in my 30's but, without children (by choice), had no reason to be part of Sunday school or Hebrew school activities. The elders welcomed me but we had little in common. Now that I am closer in age to the retirees who are active, we all relate better to each other. I foresee becoming even more involved in the next decade.

*What are your interests and hobbies? What book is on your nightstand right now?
What is one thing people would be surprised to learn about you?*

I am an avid reader, mostly romance or mystery. My husband and I enjoy boating and target shooting. We are both certified pistol instructors. We have owned boats for about 20 years. I can drive the truck and 26 foot trailer, have successfully backed the rig down a ramp to launch and capably pilot the boat. Clay has never let me dock the boat at a marina. However, I did manage to beat him once in a balloon shoot with a M1-Carbine rifle. In writing this short biography, it has become clearer to me where I get my keen sense of independence.



Mavra and her Dad

Would you like to share your story?

Please contact Irma Cole at irmacole26@gmail.com We would love to learn more about all our temple members!

Thank you Mavra for being this issue's featured profile!