

## ***Monthly Profile: This month we feature Incoming Board Member Richard Weiss***

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I was born in Brooklyn, NY. In January 1950, when I was 8 1/2 yrs. old, my family moved to Lakeland to open a plumbing store. It was a difficult transition from a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in New York to Lakeland where Jews were a small minority and not highly thought of. Growing up in Lakeland, with a population of 14,000, was not a very pleasant experience for a young Jewish male. I was often referred to with derogatory names. Growing up in Lakeland in the 1950's was difficult as I was exposed to discrimination and negative religious attitudes.

My parents were born in Brooklyn and lived there until we moved to Lakeland. They were loving and caring parents. My brother was exactly five years older than me as we had the same birthday. We both loved sports and participated in many different leagues. He is deceased.

My sister was ten years older than me and when we moved to Lakeland she married and stayed in New York. She was a loving sister and is now deceased.

My mother's parents were both from Russia. My grandmother was a great cook and every Friday we gathered at her house for our Sabbath meal. My father's parents were from Austria. My grandfather died when I was very young so I really did not know him. My grandmother was outgoing and loved to sing and play the piano. My father had the greatest influence on me as a young person as he was always positive and taught me to weigh both sides of an issue before making a final decision. My parents provided me with a life full of love and were very supportive.

I have a son, Stephen and a daughter Alisha. Stephen has two children, Kaylee 16 and Ellery 13. Alisha has twin girls, Paige and Savannah. They are both 10.

I could never ask for two children and four grandchildren to be more loving. They are very intelligent and show Maxine and me love and respect. They make our lives truly enjoyable.

I did not serve in the military. I was a passenger in a vehicle that was in an accident when I was in college and my injuries exempted me from military service.

I went to school in Lakeland and graduated from Lakeland Senior High School in 1960. I was fortunate that the University of South Florida was opening in September, 1960 and I was in the charter class. I graduated with a degree in business administration with a major in accounting and a minor in economics. I have done some graduate work in accounting. My passion was to be successful.

I was an auditor and then became the chief deputy for the Clerk of Courts and County Comptroller in 1978. When Bud Dixon retired I was appointed by Governor Chiles to fill out his term. I ran for office five times and was re-elected each time without opposition as the County Court Clerk and Comptroller for Polk County. I retired from that position approximately ten years ago.

I have served on the Temple Board on and off again for 47 years. I was recently elected as the 1st Vice President of the Temple Board.

The most unusual job I ever had was when I was in college and off for the summer break I worked for Kraft Foods and I had to fill cold jars with various citrus products. I enjoy fishing and boating and hope to get back to golf.

"A Promised Land" by Barack Obama is the current book I am reading. I like to read mystery books.

I was raised in the Jewish faith and it gave me the desire to help others in need.

My wife Maxine has influenced me the most in my life. She has shown me what courage truly is and taught me to appreciate others opinions. I learned patience and empathy from her.

I am the only person of the Jewish faith to be elected county wide in Polk County's history. I am so blessed to have such a wonderful family. I don't think there is anything I would want to do over.

The most important lesson I have learned in life is to be patient.



**Above:** My swearing in with Alisha Stephen and Kaylee. and my son in law Chris Stevens swearing me in.

**Right:** Maxine and Richard



**Below:** Richard, Maxine and children Alisha and Stephen

