

Constance Kreshtool z"l

WRJ Ner Tamid Member. It is with great sadness that we announce the loss of WRJ Past President Constance Kreshtool, who passed away on January 10, 2022, at the age of 94. Connie was a long-time member of Congregation Beth Emeth in Wilmington, Delaware.



Preceded in death by her beloved husband, Bernard; her twin sister, Rosalie Wolf; her younger sister, Nancy Melnik; and her parents, Tillie and Sam Savat; Connie is survived by her sons, Jeff (Heller), Dan (Susan) and Rick (Michelle); her grandchildren, Ben, Aaron, Sarah, Rebecca (Jared), Alana (Jeff), Michael, Evan, Andrew, Eve and Lee; and her 4 great-grandchildren.

Connie joined WRJ's Board of Directors in 1963 and served as president from 1981 to 1985. Connie is credited with "planting the seeds" for changing the organization's name from National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) to Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ). "I found I was introducing my organization by saying, 'The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods ... we are the women of Reform Judaism.' It became clear to me how much more descriptive Women of Reform Judaism is than NFTS."

One of the highlights of her tenure was when she planted trees in the "Women's Forest" in Nairobi, Kenya while attending the UN International Women's Conference.

In a [D'var Torah](#) that Connie wrote in March 2017, she said, "my local sisterhood was the doorway to a lifetime of meaningful experiences and relationships. I didn't know what awaited me when Beth Emeth submitted my name for a seat on WRJ's Board of Directors. Eventually, I rose to the presidency having met many wonderful women along the way... I visited Israel 18 times, traveled to the Soviet Union to encourage the development of Progressive Judaism in the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus...I had breakfast in the Lincoln Room of the White House during the Carter administration and lunch in the Roosevelt room in the Regan

Administration and many more meetings here and abroad. And it all began when I said, 'yes, I will serve on the telephone committee.'"

After her tenure as WRJ President, Connie continued to serve on the WRJ Board, and on many other boards including the Union for Reform Judaism, ARZA, and the Commission on Social Action, and participated in many conferences and events. Most recently, she shared her leadership stories during a conversation with other WRJ Past Presidents as part of the 2021 WRJ Holiday Auction.

According to Sara Charney, WRJ President, "Connie was the consummate mentor and friend to all who served with her on the WRJ Board. She was gracious in her deliberative manner and always generous with her time. She willingly accepted new challenges with a smile and can-do attitude. I treasured our conversations together whether about the future of WRJ, the global political landscape, or our families. Her guidance during my board service has been immeasurable. Connie's legacy will continue to live on in the very fabric and soul of our organization."

"I first met Connie in 1984 when she was president of NFTS and I served as an intern," recalled Rabbi Marla Feldman, WRJ Executive Director Emerita. "In all the years that I've known her, I have treasured her quiet wisdom, gentle guidance, insights, and devotion to the values that are the foundation of WRJ. We have lost one of our most stalwart and impactful leaders. Connie will be deeply missed."

**As a reflection of her unparalleled leadership and vision,
her bequest will be allocated to her named endowment,
the Constance S. Kreshtool President's Fund.**