

Sally Lunt, 86, feminist psychotherapist and activist

By [Bryan Marquard](#) September 11, 2016



Dr. Lunt graduated from the Massachusetts School of Law when she was in her 60s.

Sally Lunt had just been elected second-in-command of the National Women's Political Caucus when she paused in July 1981 to reflect on her life as an activist.

"People think of me as a radical, and I think of myself that way, too. The primary and basic fact of my life is that I am a feminist," she told the Globe, adding: "I have always been involved in politics."

And a few other things, too. She had a master's degree in social work from Simmons College, a doctorate from Harvard University, and finished law school in her mid-60s. She was a caseworker at Massachusetts General Hospital, taught social work at Boston University, and ran a private practice in feminist psychotherapy in Cambridge, seeing only women as patients. For her, a thread connected these pursuits. "All life is political," she told the Globe. "All relationships — between people, between countries — are political in that they involve the negotiation of power. Feminism is radical in the sense that it goes to the root of that political fabric. It is a complete redefinition of power."

Dr. Lunt, who away from work loved being on the water so much that she worked as a tall ships crew member into her 70s, died Aug. 10 in the Cadbury Commons assisted living facility in Cambridge of complications from a fall. She was 86 and previously lived for many years in Cambridge and Weston.

"She had a way about her that impressed everybody who met her, especially the men who met her," said Judy Norsigian, cofounder and former executive director of the Boston women's health nonprofit Our Bodies, Ourselves. "The feminist principles she stood for were not to be trifled with or belittled."

Dr. Lunt was an adviser to Our Bodies, Ourselves and also was a consultant for feminist therapy collective Womanspace in Boston in the 1970s, and an adviser to the feminist newspaper Sojourner. She was on the planning committee for the historic 1975 Conference on Women and Health at Harvard Medical School and served in the 1970s on the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women.

"She was in it for the long haul, beginning in the late-'60s when the movement sort of woke up," said Barbara J. Love, a board member of Veteran Feminists of America, an organization that celebrates and archives the history of women who were involved in second-wave feminism in the 1960s and '70s.

Dr. Lunt attended that organization's board meetings, too, and was featured in "Feminists Who Changed America 1963-1975," a 2006 book that Love edited. In her biographical entry in the book, Dr. Lunt noted that her mother had supported the efforts of reproductive rights pioneer Margaret Sanger and volunteered in a Sanger clinic. Dr. Lunt said she was told by her mother that she "was a feminist 'genetically.' "

"She lived and breathed the women's movement," said Norsigian, who added that Dr. Lunt "had an air about her: 'The feminism I stand for — thou shalt not stand in the way of it.' "

Born on Dec. 24, 1929, Sally Ann Herman grew up in Mount Vernon, N.Y., and was the younger of two sisters. Her father, Harry Herman, was a lawyer who became a judge in New York's Westchester County, and her mother, the former Selda Fieldman, had worked for her own father's photography business and was a reproductive rights activist. Her parents were the children of immigrants and Dr. Lunt traced her ancestry to Russian Jews who fled the pogroms the 1800s.

She attended Brantwood Hall School in Bronxville, N.Y., a private girls' school, and graduated from Hood College in Frederick, Md., which at the time was a women's college, and a place where she could ride horses in the mornings.

Moving to Washington, D.C., she mixed work and part-time studies at law school before moving to Greater Boston near her sister, Winifred Friedman, who taught at Wellesley College. Dr. Lunt graduated from Simmons College with a master's degree in social work and became a caseworker at Mass. General.

Through her sister and brother-in-law, she met Horace Gray Lunt, a Slavic languages professor at Harvard University who could read, speak, or write in more than a dozen languages. They married in 1963 and moved to a house in Weston that she helped design. He died in 2010.

The couple had two daughters, and Dr. Lunt taught part time at Boston University in a social welfare and law program. While living in the suburbs, she attended consciousness-raising gatherings with other women in her neighborhood, became involved in politics, and chaired Weston's Democratic Town Committee. Her dislike of President Richard M. Nixon was such that after he left office, she got a copy of his resignation framed and displayed it in her homes the rest of her life.

During the late 1960s and '70s, she ran seminars on feminist therapy, worked with the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, and advocated for adoption of the national Equal Rights Amendment, which in 1982 fell short in the state ratification process. Dr. Lunt also ran for her district's House seat in 1980, losing to her Republican opponent, Royall H. Switzler.

"She lived a full life, one that made a lot of contributions to the women's movement in many ways," Norsigian said.

Dr. Lunt "was passionate about her causes and wildly affectionate with people she loved," her daughter Catherine Lunt Greer of Spokane, Wash., wrote in an e-mail. "She spoke in superlatives, usually in pairs: Something was never 'good' or 'great,' it was 'marvelous and wonderful.' "

"She was a strong leader, a good leader," Love recalled, adding that Dr. Lunt also "loved to dance. She danced all the time. She danced up and down the street and to dinner."

Dr. Lunt "was funny, she was strong, she was adventurous," said her older daughter, Elizabeth of Baltimore. "She went out and she got involved. She would join things and do things and try things."

That included graduating from the Massachusetts School of Law when she was in her 60s — "I always thought that degree was unfinished business," Elizabeth said — and becoming a tall ships crew member. Dr. Lunt, who spent summers in Wellfleet, had always loved the ocean. She collected dolphin-themed jewelry, photos, paintings, and stuffed animals, and once participated in a vacation trip that allowed her to swim with dolphins. She wore a dolphin gold pendant and "sometimes said that she was a dolphin," Catherine said. "She called us her baby dolphins."

In addition to her two daughters, Dr. Lunt left five grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday in the Sheerr Room at Fay House in Radcliffe Yard in Cambridge.

Dr. Lunt donated papers related to her activism to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard. She saw her efforts and the work of other second-wave feminists as irrevocable steps toward the future.

"The women's movement has now moved to what I call glacial certainty — slowly, powerfully, and inexorably," she told the Globe in 1981. "Women will never go back"