

# ***Mary Jean Crenshaw Tully, 78, A Leader of Modern Feminists***

By [Wolfgang Saxon](#), January 17, 2004

Mary Jean Crenshaw Tully, a founding strategist of modern feminism and former president of the National Organization for Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, died on Dec. 27 at White Plains Hospital. She was 78 and lived in Armonk, N.Y.

The cause was a heart attack, said her daughter, N. Linsey Tully.

Mary Jean Tully was an architect and mainstay of the feminist movement that regained momentum in the 1970's. She was most recently a board member and adviser of the Veteran Feminists of America, a gathering of the "Second Wave" of the movement.

She was a co-founder of the Westchester chapter of NOW and went on to head the group's national legal arm from 1971 to 1977.

From 1971 to 1981 she was president of the Fund for Women's Rights, founded by Betty Friedan to lobby for the Equal Rights Amendment and other women's rights issues. She founded the Midlife Institute at Marymount Manhattan College and directed it from 1981 to 1986.

In the late 1980's, Ms. Tully gave financial support to the Tully Crenshaw Feminist Oral History Project, which collects interviews with those active in the movement. It became part of the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard.

Ms. Tully started it as the History of NOW and Betty Friedan Project, and it led to reunions of those active in the organization's early days, which in turn gave rise to the Veteran Feminists of America, founded in her Manhattan apartment. Now based in Lafayette, La., it tracks the movement's early adherents and keeps them informed through a Web site, [www.vfa.us](http://www.vfa.us).

Ms. Tully was also a founder and past co-chairwoman of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and a founding member of the New York State National Women's Political Caucus.

Mary Jean Crenshaw, an Army brat, was born in Fort Sill, Okla., and educated at Stanford University, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Chicago before she received a master's degree in sociology at Wayne State University. She raised five children and lectured in sociology at Long Island University, Brooklyn, for several years in the late 1960's.

Her involvement with social issues began in the late 1940's, when she was active in the N.A.A.C.P. in Schenectady, N.Y. In 1952, while living in Kansas, she began an association with the League of Women Voters.

Ms. Tully's 1947 marriage to C. Robert Tully, also of Armonk, ended in divorce in 1991. She is survived by three sons, Bruce C., of Manhattan; Scott P., of Pleasantville, N.Y.; and Andrew G., of San Francisco; two daughters, N. Linsey, of Manhattan and Laura L., of Lexington, Mass.; a sister, Carolyn Griffin of San Antonio; and six grandchildren.