

# BETTY SPAULDING: SHE WAS `ALL CATTLE

Betty Spaulding, 80, of Hartford, died Oct. 31 in Maine.

Tall, beautiful and rich, Betty Spaulding grew up on the Main Line in Philadelphia, where the debutante invited more than 2,000 friends to her coming-out party and enjoyed a close friendship with the Kennedy family.

By the late 1960s, Spaulding was a leader in the fight to gain equal rights for women in Connecticut, especially in divorce settlements. She played an active role in the passage of the Connecticut equal rights amendment in 1974, was president of the Greater Hartford chapter of the National Organization for Women and was twice named one of the 100 outstanding women in the state.

Over time, Spaulding's home in Hartford became the unofficial headquarters of Connecticut feminists, overflowing with spare beds and heated discussions about the most effective ways to advance women's rights.

She attributed her political evolution to the treatment she received in court when she began divorce proceedings in 1963 after six children and 19 years of marriage.

Alice Chapman of Danbury, a former president of Connecticut NOW, once asked Spaulding how she had evolved from society belle to political activist.

"It only took one session in divorce court," answered Spaulding, who later became chairwoman of Connecticut NOW's Family Justice task force on divorce and custody issues. Spaulding said her own lawyer told her the divorce wouldn't have happened if she had treated her husband better.

"She adopted that issue and was as tenacious as the devil," said Chapman. "That was her main issue. Betty never wavered from that."

As a lobbyist at the State Capitol on women's issues, Spaulding was known for her focus on issues and her political savvy. She was beautiful and unpretentious. She dressed simply, had a booming but melodious voice and, at six feet tall, stood out in a crowd..

With legislators, "she was very direct, almost brusque," said Chapman. "She made no bones about how she felt."

She picketed the Bristol police station to protest the arrest of prostitutes but not their customers, and she was chairwoman of the state delegation to the 1977 National

Women's Conference in Houston and a charter member of the state's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. In 1986, when she was 65, she obtained an undergraduate degree from Yale University.

"She had a very gracious manner. Her mother was a Savannah belle," said Caroline Hopley of Greenwich, another former NOW leader. "Her father was a Victorian gentleman. This sort of grace informed her manner."

"What she would bring to the table was a sense of strategy and sense of humor," Hopley said.

In her youth, Spaulding summered on Cape Cod and got to know John F. Kennedy and his family. She roomed with Kathleen Kennedy in Washington, and after the United States entered World War II, Spaulding joined the Red Cross and went to Italy and North Africa to provide support services to servicemen. She was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery.

After marriage, she moved to Greenwich and raised her family but retained her ties to the Kennedys. An outstanding fencer and two-handicap golfer, she played golf with President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs incident in 1961. "It was not the time to correct his slice," she told her family.

"She really valued justice and equity," said Florence Spaulding of New Mexico, one of Betty's three daughters. "She felt a civic obligation to help her fellows.

"You know the Texas expression about 'all hat and no cattle'?" Florence asked. "She was 'all cattle and no hat.' "