

PJ 4-7-1999
OBITUARIES

Lila Delman, 73; founder of Lila Delman Real Estate

By GERALD S. GOLDSTEIN
Journal Staff Writer

NARRAGANSETT — Lila Delman, 73, of 41 Ocean Rd., who founded the realty company that bears her name and whose dynamic style turned her into a public personality, died on Thursday at South County Hospital, Wakefield, after an extended illness. She was the wife of Clement Delman.



Mrs. Delman, successful in real estate at a time when few women had entered the business, began in the early 1960s by searching out rentals — at no commission — for out-of-town friends who longed to summer by the sea.

"I said to myself, you might as well make money at it," she once recalled. Soon, with her daughter Stephanie, she had begun to corral major listings — including one oceanfront mansion designed and built by McKim, Mead and White, the designers of the State House and Narragansett's most noted landmark, the Towers.

As the rental part of her business expanded, Mrs. Delman took a special interest in finding apartments for minorities, at a time when housing discrimination was not uncommon in Rhode Island.

She continued to operate Lila Delman Real Estate — now run by a daughter and son-in-law, and expanded to Newport — until illness forced her retirement in 1988.

A government watchdog through the years, Mrs. Delman frequently attended Town Council meetings and was a key member in the 1960s of a citizens' group that made headlines by discovering inequities in the municipal tax roles.

Once described in a Journal story as "a magnificently big woman," Mrs. Delman accented her presence with trademark, flowing dresses in floral patterns and bright colors; chartreuse and coral were favorites.

In fact Mrs. Delman once drew

the enmity of her neighbors when she had her rambling, 19th-century home on Ocean Road — neighboring the Towers — painted coral.

"Everybody hated it," recalled her husband — but not Mrs. Delman, whose taste also ran to ornate antiques that she bought at estate sales whenever a local mansion went on the block.

Her love for the community and its history resulted in a lawn replete with classical statuary from old mansions, and a home office crammed with an astonishing array of period carvings, lamps and clocks.

For years, Mrs. Delman swam daily, even into December, at her beloved town beach — she once served as a beach commissioner — and she was also a familiar site on the bicycle she rode around town.

The Delman name, now familiar in real estate circles, was originally neither hers nor her husband's.

Born Lila Pearlman, Mrs. Delman descended from an orthodox Jewish family that ran the former Sterling shoe store in downtown Providence. She met Clement DeLucia, an Italian-Catholic toolmaker from Providence, on Narragansett Beach.

When they were married in 1947, the couple decided to merge their last names, taking the "DeL" from DeLucia and the "man" from Pearlman to form Delman.

Mrs. Delman was a daughter of the late Israel and Ida (Mines) Pearlman of Providence.

In addition to her husband, she leaves three daughters, Melanie Delman and Pamela Hodnett, both of Narragansett, and Stephanie Baden of Cathedral City, Calif.; a son, Brian Delman of Newport and Narragansett; five brothers, Alan, Thomas, Marc and Leonard Pearlman, all of Providence, and Ben Pearlman of Cape Cod; four sisters, Adele Curhan of Narragansett, Alice Mandel of Washington, D.C., Anna Shabshallowitz of Fall River, and Caroline Leighton of Sherman Oaks, Calif., and four grandchildren. She was also a sister of the late Elaine Barron.

The funeral was private.