Florence Kolb, 75, dies in crash; former official of Peerless Co.

Florence Elaine Kolb, 75, of Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, Fla., who for years managed and was a buyer for the Peerless Co. clothing store chain founded by her late father-in-law, died Saturday when her small car collided head-on with a truck in Falmouth, Mass. She was the widow of William Mark Kolb.

Police said Mrs. Kolb was alone in her 1985 Toyota when it crossed the center line of Route 151 about 4:30 p.m., became pinned beneath the truck and broke free, then was struck by another vehicle in the center of the roadway.

Mrs. Kolb, who was trapped in the wreckage, was pronounced dead at the scene, police said.

William Kolb's father, Isador Kolb, founded Peerless in 1924, in Troy, N.Y. Peerless opened a second store in 1937 in Pawtucket, which became headquarters for the company. It moved its headquarters to Providence in 1958, when it bought the former Providence Boston Store on Westminster Mall.

By 1969, the company had announced plans for a large store on the Warwick Mall, but later that year William Kolb sold the chain to Goldring Inc. of New York. The Kolb family maintained ownership of the 256,000-square-foot building on Westminster Mall, which is still the site of the downtown Peerless Store.

KOLB, FLORENCE

Mrs. Kolb was associated with her husband in the William Kolb Corp., a private holding company, and in 1975 became the president of that corporation. Mrs. Kolb was born in Norfolk, Va., a daughter of the late Nathan and Annie (Hackner) Braunstein.

A graduate of New York University, she worked as a clothing buyer in the New York City area before joining Peerless, for which she was a manager and a buyer.

A Bristol resident for many years, she maintained homes in Palm Beach, Fla., and New Seabury, Mass., since 1972. She was a member of Hadassah and Temple Beth-El.

She leaves a son, William Mark Kolb Jr. of Cumberland; a daughter, Leslie Kolb Benjoya of Newton, Mass.; a sister, Lee Lowe of Enfield, Conn., and two granddaughters.

The funeral service will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. at the Max Sugarman Memorial Chapel, 458 Hope St., Providence. Burial will be in Sharon Memorial Park, Sharon, Mass.