SHULMAN, Rebecca

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Rebecca Shulman, Former Hadassah President, Dies at 100

Rebecca Shulman, a former National President of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, died on March 30, at her home in Manhattan. In October 1996, Shulman, who had been national president from 1953 to 1956, turned 100 years old.

"We are deeply saddened by the death of Rebecca Shulman. She was with us for an entire century and it is difficult to imagine Hadassah without Rebecca," Marlene E. Post, national president of Hadassah said, fondly recalling her predecessor. "Rebecca's passion for Israel and the Jewish people have inspired generations of Hadassah leaders and members and she will be greatly missed."

At the time of Shulman's milestone birthday last year, Post had noted that "for the first time in Hadassah's history, a former national president has reached the venerable age of 100." Born some 15 years before the founding of Hadassah in 1912, Shulman was a lifelong Zionist, first elected as a delegate to the World Zionist Congress in 1929. In 1932, she became a national board member.

As chairman of the Hadassah National Convention in 1945, she called for the mobilization of the then-150,000 members to become "soldiers" in the war for Jewish liberation and nationhood. According to Abba Eban, former Israel Ambassador to the United Nations, for the next three years, Shulman's home in Stamford was the "core and hub of activity for the Jewish State" during the years just prior to the establishment of the state. He, David Ben Gurion, Chaim Weizmann, Golda Meir and other activists for a Jewish state were frequently "whisked away to that hideaway" for weekend retreats following United Nations conferences and meetings, Eban said.

A trained nurse an social worker, in 1946 Shulman was sent to pre-state Palestine to study Hadassah's medical services and its ability to absorb thousands of refugees from Europe. During Israel's War of Independence, she was in Jerusalem and was present when the State of Israel was proclaimed.

Rebecca was able to transmit her firsthand knowledge of the most urgent needs of the fledgling country to her Hadassah colleagues all over America when she became Hadassah's 10th national president in 1953. In 1954, to commemorate her husband, Herman, himself an ardent Zionist who died in 1945, she presented 12 paintings by American artists to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, establishing an American wing.

After her presidency she continued to devote her talents and skills to the improvement of medical services in Israel and the building of Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center, today the largest medical care and research facility in the Middle East.

The matriarch of a large family Rebecca Shulman was especially proud of her late son, Paul, who was instrumental in building Israel's Navy and became its first admiral.