



Miriam Orzech

March 4, 1931 - August 31, 2018

Miriam (Mimi) Orzech was born in New York, NY, on March 4, 1931. Mimi graduated from high school in Portland, attended Reed College and Lewis and Clark College, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. There she met her beloved husband and partner-in-life Ze'ev, whom she married in 1952. The couple moved to Corvallis in 1957.

In the mid-1960s Mimi was asked to teach in the History department at Oregon State University. This prompted her to get an MA in History, followed by a PhD in Education from OSU in 1974. She did this while working full time in the Educational Opportunities Program, first as an academic advisor and then as its director.

She later served as Assistant Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs at OSU, where she oversaw all diversity-related programs, including EOP, as well as spearheading the creation of OSU's Holocaust Memorial Program. Mimi believed deeply in education, and that it should be available to more than just a privileged few, which led her to create SMILE (Science & Math Investigative Learning Experiences), which provides science, math and engineering programs to minority and disadvantaged students at public schools throughout Oregon. The program continues to offer a pathway to college to students who often come from families where no one has attended college before, and inspired the creation of a parallel SMILE program in Rhode Island.

Mimi had a lifelong commitment to social justice and to the arts, and was involved in the early days of the Barn Theater, predecessor to Corvallis' Majestic Theater. Perhaps closest to her heart was Corvallis' Jewish community, where she was a founding member of the Corvallis chapter of the Jewish women's organization Hadassah, and later Beit Am, the Mid-Willamette Valley Jewish Community.

The Orzech home was always open to guests, including new Jewish arrivals in town and the many foreign students and visiting professors that Ze'ev collected. There was always something delicious cooking in Mimi's kitchen, and her generosity and warmth – not to mention her homemade quince jelly – will be remembered fondly by people around the world.

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Mimi died peacefully on August 31, 2018, surrounded by family, friends and her rabbi. She was preceded in death by her parents Martin and Pearl Weitz, and her husband Ze'ev B. Orzech. She is survived by her brother Harrison Weitz (Leona) and her sister Ellen DeNelsky (Garland), her three children Sarah Orzech, Dan Orzech (Catherine Polan Orzech) and Joe Orzech (Carol Benedick) and six grandchildren, Micah and Aliza Tuttle, Shira and Amital Orzech, and Amelia and Rafael Orzech.

Donations in memory of Mimi may be made to Beit Am, the OSU Foundation's Mimi Orzech SMILE Endowed Scholarship, Hadassah Women's Organization, the Southern Poverty Law Center or Emily's List.

A memorial service will be held October 7, 2018, at 2:00 p.m., at the

Chintimini Senior Center in Corvallis.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

OCT 7. 2:00 AM - 2:00 PM (PT)

Corvallis Chintimini Senior & Community Center
2601 NW Tyler Ave
Corvallis, OR 97330

Tribute Wall

NA

“ *I remember when the Orzech family lived across the street from us on NW 27th St. many, many years ago, and later when my brother and one of her sons ran track at Crescent Valley High School. She will be greatly missed by any and all who knew her.*

Nadja K M Adolf - September 19, 2018 at 04:37 PM