
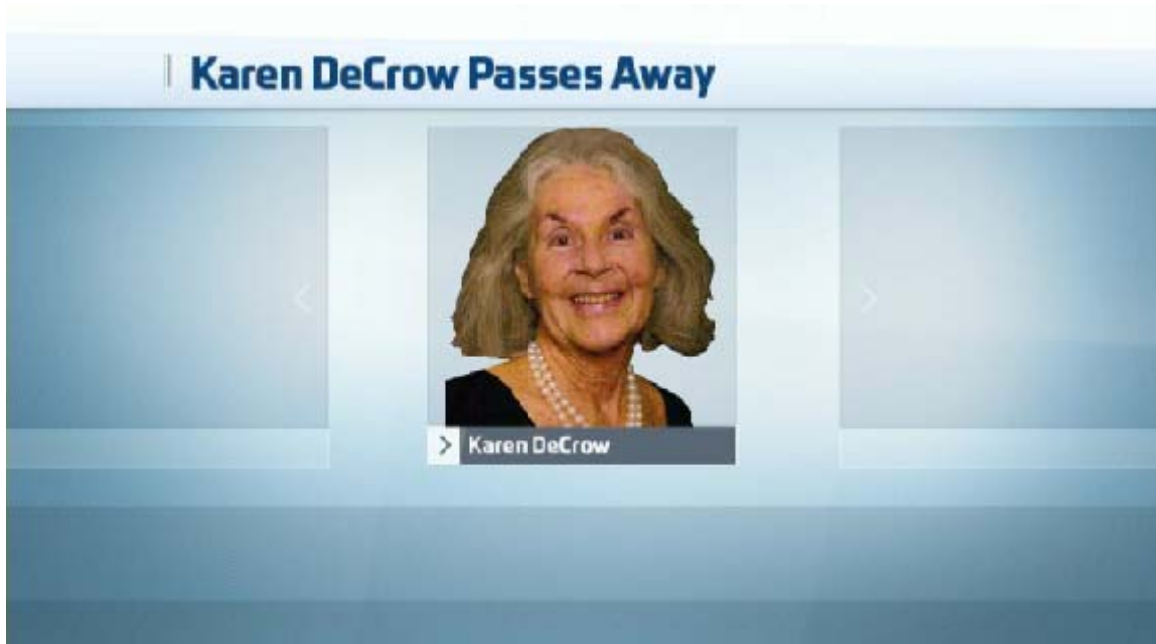


# Women's Rights Advocate, SU Grad Dies After Lengthy Illness

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ONONDAGA COUNTY, N.Y. -- As women battled for equal rights in the 1960s and 1970s, she played a major role in the direction of that battle. Onondaga County's Karen DeCrow, a one time President of the National Organization for Women, has died.

The feminist leader never doubted the legitimacy of the fight, nor the ability of women to succeed in the battle.

She had begun her career as a journalist, but Karen DeCrow seemed ill-suited as an observer of her times. She had to be a participant.

In the 60s, she became the first woman to run for mayor of Syracuse.

In 1967, DeCrow became the president of the Syracuse Chapter of the National Organization for Women. She attended Syracuse University and was the only female graduate of the College of Law in 1972.

By 1974, a veteran of the women's movement, she had risen to the presidency of the National Organization for Women.

"I was instantly on the national map. If I want to meet with someone, chances are they'll meet with me," DeCrow said.

These were times when the world seemed to change by the day. The women's movement seemed to be reaching a crescendo.

"We in the feminist movement made such a dramatic change in a couple of decades. It's been a revolution, not an evolution," DeCrow said.

In later years, DeCrow would still be puzzled by the ongoing battle over some of those issues back in the 70s. First on that list, abortion rights.

"I would never have dreamed in the 1970s that we'd still be talking about it. 40 years ago, and it should be off the table but it isn't," DeCrow said.

DeCrow won many battles, but lost some. Most notably, the campaign to win the Equal Rights Amendment. Eventually she lost the NOW Presidency after just three years when she fought to make sure equal rights were extended to gays and lesbians. Some thought that was too controversial.

It was a year ago, that DeCrow sat down for an interview with the Onondaga Historical Association.

"She wasn't jaded. She wasn't bitter. She had a great outlook on life and a wonderful sense of humor," Gregg Tripoli, the Onondaga Historical Association executive director said.

She spoke for two hours about her battles. Her victories. Her defeats. An attorney making a final summation.

"Karen was a very smart woman and I think she realized that, you know, that we were capturing a history of her life at a time when she had more of it behind her than she did ahead of her," Tripoli said.

In the end, her description of her complicated life seemed very simple.

"It's been an adventure," DeCrow said.

An adventure she had shared with the world for 76 years.

- See more at: <http://centralny.twcnews.com/content/news/743448/women-s-rights-advocate--su-grad-dies-after-lengthy-illness/#sthash.LpGyXkuR.dpuf>