

# Sinai 75: A Look Back at 75 Years of WoTS & Sisterhood Leadership



WE ARE THE DEDICATED  
WOMEN OF TEMPLE SINAI

WOMEN OF  
TEMPLE  
SINAI



**Estelle Mann 1984–1987**

*What was your biggest challenge?* Getting people to participate

*What gave you satisfaction?* Having the Temple members join

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years?* Not really

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* I'm a worker, not just a leader

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* Makes it more well rounded, supports Temple Sinai financially

**Mayda Roth 1989–1990**

I felt honored to be asked to become a Sisterhood President. During our term, Phyllis Spatz, Mimi Blye, and I served as co-presidents. My husband served on Temple Sinai's Board, and we were both proud to be able to volunteer for the Congregation. From lifecycle events to pot luck dinners to the Food Festival to worshipping as a community, Temple Sinai grounded us.

**Marcia Morton 1993–1995**

*What was your biggest challenge?* Being the first WoTS President! The gift shop was a big challenge with the various personalities in trying to work together as a group.

It was an effort in keeping people's interest in wanting to be a part of WoTS.

The time WoTS board met was another challenge. The previous sisterhood met during the week. Times were changing and more women were working outside of the home and could not meet during the week. That is how the Sunday morning meetings started.

*What gave you satisfaction?*

It gave me satisfaction in being part of the newly formed Women of Temple Sinai (WoTS) organization. Seeing things actually happen, such as the Dress Barn fashion show, board members being the models. It gave me such pleasure seeing women coming together and successfully

creating programs that interested diverse groups of women. I enjoyed working with all the of women and developing new relationships.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years? If yes, how?* Yes—We joined the national organization shortly after being re-established although it was not my vision at the time. I liked the idea of WoTS being focused on re-establishing as a group within Temple Sinai. In the long run, there were many advantages connecting to WRJ as the organization grew. My hesitation in joining WRJ had more to do with my own conflict with my mother and her strong commitment to the sisterhood in the synagogue I grew up in. Sisterhood to me was my mother's and didn't hold a very positive feeling, so I did not want the sisterhood to be anything like my mother's sisterhood. Changing with the times is so important in the health of the organization. We know what happens when we don't change with the times—our organization becomes irrelevant and eventually dies.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* My strongest leadership quality is being a good listener. It is an important quality to have as we know people need to be heard and acknowledged.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* WOTS adds a lot of energy and alternative programming ideas that enhance Temple life.



## Esther Nathanson 1997–1999

*What was your biggest challenge?* My biggest challenge was encouraging the Steering Committee members of the re-formulated Sisterhood (Women of Temple Sinai) to re-affiliate with the national Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ). Having formed the new group in 1993, reaffiliation was a major step to consider, and we had already discussed it for several years. In fact, at one of our earlier meetings, I myself had been influenced by Barbara Gibson's impassioned plea that we re-join. There would be dues to pay, of course, and some felt that we could not afford that expense. I was a strong advocate for being part of the larger women's organization. Benefits of national affiliation included sources of materials and information to enhance our programming; a framework for consulting with experienced leaders who could suggest solutions to knotty problems; and a structure fostering connections with regional sisterhoods. After I took office, we finally voted to rejoin. In the fall of 1997, I attended the Biennial in Dallas.

*What gave you satisfaction?* In general, I found satisfaction in working with a variety of women who brought so many different strengths and viewpoints to our enterprise.

My greatest particular satisfaction occurred when WoTS members voted to rejoin WRJ. That fall, in 1997, I attended WRJ's biennial meeting in Dallas—held in those years in conjunction with the URJ Biennial. To stand when our Temple's name was called in recognition of our re-affiliation was a matter of great pride for me. Subsequently, I valued going to successive Biennials with Rabbi Gibson and highly motivated groups of Temple members.

Another source of satisfaction was the establishment of the Rosh Chodesh group. Ruth Reidbord submitted a motion that we start such a group which would meet monthly to discuss short stories and other writings. The motion passed; the group has flourished to this day.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years. If yes, how?* Over the years, WOTS has engaged a WRJ Chai Mitzvah program which creates a



social network that guides and supports each other along their Jewish Journeys. WOTS has actively promoted inclusivity. We have partnered with other Congregational groups, for example, the Tikkun Olam/Social Justice Center and the Disability Task Force, in support of their programming.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* I really enjoy people and enjoy bringing people together. I have been told that I am positive, approachable, patient, and supportive, helping to create a welcoming environment for both long-term members and new participants.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* WoTS gives women in the congregation the opportunity to work together on a variety of projects, while getting to know each other in the process. We support our congregation itself with annual monetary donations and in other ways, for example, offering scholarships to young women to subsidize trips to Israel or other Jewish-oriented activities.



### **Carolyn Schwarz 1999–2001**

For me, being Chair of WoTS gave me an opportunity to improve my leadership skills and to be of service to Temple Sinai. Over the years, WoTS has thrived and grown, increasing our programming and attracting many active and enthusiastic members. I especially cherish the relationships I have been able to form with many dedicated and caring women. Rosh Chodesh (Women's Study Group) meetings were initiated by Ruth Reidbord during my term. WoTS provides the female members of Temple Sinai the opportunity to form friendships and community, to have fun, to learn from our programs and monthly social service speakers, to work to raise funds to support Temple Sinai and to provide programs and be of service to our Family of Families.

### **Florence Chapman 2003–2005**

*What was your biggest challenge?* My biggest challenge as WoTS Chair was convincing the Temple Board of the importance of WoTS and educating them about all the things the women of WoTS do to benefit Temple members. After a presentation to the Board, several Board members came up to me to say "I had no idea..."

*What gave you satisfaction?* I got greatest satisfaction from the ready participation of the members of the WoTS Steering Committee. At the time that I was Chair, I was working full-time. Anything that needed to be done for WoTS was readily done by several volunteers.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years. If yes, how?* The greatest change in WoTS has been the inclusion of younger women, single women and the LGBTQ community.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* I think the strongest quality of my leadership was and is an openness to the leadership of others when appropriate.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* Of course, WoTS helps Temple Sinai financially with a sizable yearly contribution. However, it is also an opportunity for women of all interests to come together and share.





## Jane Siegel z"l 2005–2007

*From Barbara Gibson:* Jane had a laser-like focus on whatever project was in front of her. She was able to see the big picture of what the project was to accomplish as well as the dozens or hundreds of small details involved in reaching those goals. Her focus often meant she came across as quite serious and cerebral, which she was, but she also had a quick sense of humor which brought levity to many situations.

*From Suzan Hauptman:* Jane knew her stuff! She had such a large heart and a drive to help out. But, sometimes it translated a bit more "in your face." She only wanted the best; whether it was organizing one food or discussing where to donate tzedakah. She wanted frank conversations and for everyone to stay focused. When the events happened, she knew they would be successful because of all of her preparation beforehand. She never left off any detail. (Although she often over-ordered food!!)

It's not the WoTS Jane knew but, it is definitely a place she would still find comfortable. She would also have plenty of ideas on how to keep WoTS current, active, and relevant. She would want to nurture new leaders and help them get their footing.

*From Carol Woolford:* Jane Siegel is the one who asked me out for coffee one day, told me I would make a great WoTS President, and then listed all the qualities that she could see in me that would make me successful at this position. I didn't disagree with what she saw in me, but I knew holding this position would definitely put me outside my comfort zone. After numerous talks with her about WoTS, WRJ, and all the women who would support me as President, I agreed to be considered for the position. I am thankful that I did, as I have built strong relationships with so many others because of this. Jane's love of WoTS, WRJ, and Temple Sinai was so evident in all she did. From her days of organizing Matzah Brittle and making sure it was done correctly, to her advocacy in South America for the needs of the Jewish communities, Jane was a force to be reckoned with.



*From Esther Nathanson:* Jane Siegel was a brilliant, energetic woman who enhanced every enterprise with which she was associated. Jane was not only a notable forceful leader for Women of Temple Sinai, but she was also a member of the International Board of the Women of Reform Judaism and she served as the WRJ representative to the World Union for Progressive Judaism Yad b'Yad Task Force, supporting the needs of progressive Jewish communities in Latin America. (She was always passionate about Latin America and often traveled there in a professional capacity.)

This was a woman who, while active at Temple Sinai, held a position of Senior Scientist at Carnegie Mellon University where she was also a founding director of an information technology center which was spun off from the university in 2000. Jane died unexpectedly, after a brief illness, on July 14, 2014.

### *From Florence Chapman:*

When I was Chair of WoTS, Jane Siegel was the Vice Chair. In that role she was consistently helpful. For instance, she assisted in my Board presentation creating slides to emphasize what I had prepared to say. Jane also took the initiative to organize several WoTS projects, for instance, the Purim baskets. Jane, as WoTS Vice Chair, as Temple Board Member and as congregant, took the lead to get projects done. She was a CMU professor, yet she always had time for Temple Sinai.



*From Susan Cohen:*

Jane Siegel was a force. I didn't know her well as an individual, only as a strong advocate for WoTS and WRJ and women's rights. She was President when I joined the WoTS Steering Committee and I was inspired and awed by her knowledge and passion. She was one of the women I wanted to be like "when I grew up". I hope I've lived up to her legacy even a little bit.

*From Lynn Magid Lazar:*

*What was your biggest challenge?* I was district president in the late 90's and found it challenging to try to re-engage and engage the Pittsburgh sisterhoods. Women at Rodef Shalom actually wanted to leave our district and join the Midwest district! Although we still had district numbers at that point! WoTS was still in a period of re-envisioning itself. As always—Jane was the voice of "can do" and here are six ideas of how we "can do" whatever the issues/plans were!

*What gave you satisfaction?* Satisfaction in resolving much of the above described challenges! And actually moving to Pittsburgh (1998) and becoming a part of WoTS and Temple Sinai. I was comfortable in building on the relationships that already existed and incredibly honored to have been so welcomed and supported in my emerging WRJ leadership roles. Jane was so very supportive and she could organize anyone at anytime to do anything!

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years? If yes, how?* I think it has definitely changed—as all organizations have been called upon to do! It is such a positive attribute that WoTS has continued to reinvent itself and to adapt to changing times. We continue to be a vibrant and integral part of Temple Sinai.

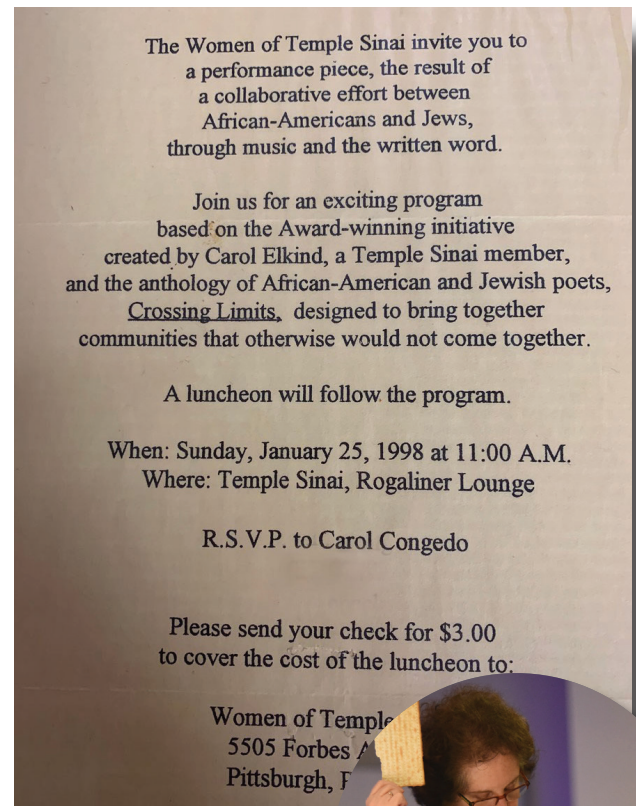
Jane was totally aware (before so many others) of the interconnectedness of our worldwide global family. Her travels to South America...both professionally and for World Union for Progressive Judaism...were important, informative and helped Temple Sinai and WRJ broaden their perspective. Jane was brilliant and helped all of us focus on a global Jewish world.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* I believe that my strongest leadership quality is the ability to connect with and motivate others. I learned a great deal from Jane—and I loved that we shared so many passions and interests.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* WoTS adds women power to Temple Sinai.

I strongly believe that women—connected to one another—can accomplish anything! I believe that WoTS offers four things:

1. an open doorway to folks who want to engage with life at Temple Sinai
2. a pathway for engaged women to accomplish together what is not possible individually
3. a group that Temple Sinai leadership can depend upon for all sorts of support
4. a group that models commitment to one another and to our Temple Sinai family of families.





### Jean Kablack 2007–2009

I had terrific role models. Lynn Magid Lazar, Jane Siegel, and Esther Nathanson were all, each in her own way, seriously involved with WRJ. They and many, many others with a long history with Sisterhood/WoTS deeply influenced my decision to accept when I was asked to serve. I loved the liveliness of meetings with ideas and opinions swirling in the air, the buzz of women working together (and sometimes “across the aisle” with Brotherhood) to plan and run programs and events, and especially that there was always warmth in the room when we met for WoTS business. There was also a strong sense of purpose to contribute in as many ways as possible to the whole Temple Sinai community as we supported each other in sisterhood.

For me, the most fun thing we did during my tenure was the two original cabarets to lift everyone’s spirits during the dreary days of winter featuring our cantorial soloist at the time. The most challenging thing was the mighty efforts that were applied to keep the gift shop going. The best, however, was that, regardless of immediate joys and challenges, the traditional offerings of WoTS—programs, matzah brittle, scholarships, etc.—roll around each year and the women are there to make them happen.



### Suzan Hauptman 2009–2011

*What was your biggest challenge?* At the time I became president, we were seeing a shift where volunteers were also working full-time day jobs more and more. We needed to expand the number of volunteers, but we also needed to hold folks accountable for what they signed up to do. Additionally, when we made recommendations for events, we also were required to attend those events. This way we were able to cast a wider net for volunteers and hopefully increase participation. Sometimes it worked, other times it didn't. But, we definitely learned on-going lessons.

*What gave you satisfaction?* On a personal level my greatest satisfaction was being able to plan and attend events with my mother. Growing up she would always go to sisterhood events and I didn't really understand anything further. Being president while she was also on the committee gave us valuable time together. I loved watching the committee working as well. When volunteers took roles and watching everyone working together were proud moments indeed.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years? If yes, how?* Definitely—but, change is good and needs to happen. Again, gone are the days that women are home waiting for things to do. We are working women, women with many different priorities, but we still want to feel part of the larger group. We still want to be supported, be able to help, and strengthen bonds by being active participants. So now we find we are creating many different outlets for this such as Rosh Chodesh, cooking classes, book clubs, social action, etc.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* My strength comes from those around me. I can talk...a lot. But, without committed volunteers and other leaders listening, helping, and supporting, a leader will fail. "The Wind Beneath My Wings" so to speak.

What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai? WoTS adds depth, color, and richness to the tapestry of Sinai. We are women who support other women, other groups, activities, and Temple Sinai as a whole.





### **Carol Woolford 2011–2013, 2021–2023**

*What was your biggest challenge?* I am now in my second term as WoTS president, separated from the first by 10 years. Some of the challenges are the same and some are unique to this second tenure. WoTS is constantly striving to broaden its membership—to be attractive to all whom identify as women: women of all ages, working and non-working, young and old, with and without young children. This has not changed over the years. What has changed is trying to keep membership engaged during the last few years as meetings have been held remotely. And the new norm will definitely mean being able to engage women both remotely and in person for meetings and events.

*What gave you satisfaction?* The new friendships that I made and am still making while being WoTS president is what is most satisfying. I have always been able to count on the women around me to help me in any way that they can.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years? If yes, how?* WoTS has always been about nurturing relationships. I think what has changed are our programming interests, which are now directed more toward education and social advocacy.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* I think my strongest quality of leadership is having patience to listen to all.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* WoTS adds a unique women's perspective to Temple Sinai. From its support with youth scholarships and women's leadership grants to its long running Matzah Brittle "friend-raiser" and Holiday card fundraiser, we do all that we can to help assist Temple financially and provide a place for women to come together.

### **Susan Cohen 2013–2015**

My years as WoTS President were both rewarding and frustrating. I came to office during a difficult time at Temple Sinai. There was a lot of staff turnover, restructuring or canceling of some loved programs, and so on. Morale was very low, and both Temple and WoTS membership was declining. That said, I discovered things about myself that I never knew. I learned that perhaps my strongest skill was in listening to diverse opinions or ideas and being able to create a consensus and a blueprint for moving forward. I am most proud of the Intergenerational Women's Seder that we organized. I am a strong advocate for the importance of Sisterhood, and for the need of women for a place of their own to grow, develop their skills, and to support one another in good times and bad. I was so fortunate to have the example and support of so many previous WoTS leaders. Looking forward, we need to find a way to welcome our trans and non-binary members into our organization, if they so desire.

### **Laura Arnold 2015–2017**

As I think back on my two years as Chairwoman of Women of Temple Sinai, I get a smile on my face thinking of all the wonderful, talented women I was blessed to work with. My leadership was definitely a joint effort, from the help that Laura Fehl gave me as Vice Chair to the wonderful ideas of the programming committee. My biggest disappointment was that a snow storm forced the cancellation of an arts program that was so carefully planned by Suzan Hauptman and her committee. WoTS is a vital part of Temple Sinai, giving women of all ages and backgrounds an opportunity to work together and form new friendships. One of our ongoing successes has been the institution of Chai Mitzvah learning sessions.

## **Laura Fehl 2017–2019**

*What was your biggest challenge?* Bringing the multigenerational members together realizing that we are more alike than not.

*What gave you satisfaction?* Seeing members connect with one another through their shared experiences and seeing multigenerational connections realizing that we all have something to give and celebrate together. Sharing our stories and realizing we are all searching for connection. Seeing the joy of our members helping one another.

*Do you think WoTS has changed over the years? If yes, how?* The core of WoTS is still very much the same as 30 years ago—it is about relationships and connecting to one another for common causes. It has changed in the way we approach this as the world around us changes.

*What, in your opinion, is your strongest quality of leadership?* Knowing my limitations and utilizing the strengths of other women surrounding me.

*What do you think WoTS adds to Temple Sinai?* It adds women's voices and our unique leadership experiences from a woman's perspective. Women know the importance of relationships and how they play into the leadership role.

The one thing I treasure about WoTS is the fact that I joined as one of the youngest members (thank you Louise Malakoff for the invitation!) as a young adult and have grown up with the organization and bring the history and the women's shoulders in which we stand on today. WoTS would not be WoTS if it weren't for the individual and collective leadership of all of our past Presidents.

I look forward to the next 30 years and will continue to support this vital organization in any way I can.

## **Susan Blackman 2019–2021**

Although new to WoTS I was able to engage as an active WoTS member from the beginning because I was voted in as a recording secretary. I have met my challenges as they came along.

For instance, in March, 2020, I had to decide whether or not to hold our Board meeting. There was talk of a new contagious disease, COVID-19. Based on Dr. Liz Miller's advice not to hold the meeting, I cancelled. The following month we held our first Zoom meeting, and our faithful Board members were there to carry out business as usual.

As a leader, I brought order to meetings by using an agenda to stay on course as well as requesting committee reports in advance. During my administration, we defined and put a fence around spending. I have observed a change around volunteerism because so many more women are working. Still, we have good volunteer participation. WoTS has been an asset to Temple. We continue to purchase or aid in purchasing, for example, as a contributor to the High Holiday prayer books. We always have youth scholarships for trips to Israel, or Reform youth projects.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to be Chair. As I met my challenges, I made many new friends.





# SINA 75

Every year, many Temple Sinai women step forward and join WoTS, all knowing that we're stronger together as we ready the way for today's and tomorrow's generations

## 75 Years of WoTS & Sisterhood Leaders

### WoTS

93–95 Marcia Morton  
95–97 Lisa Weissfeld  
97–99 Esther Nathanson  
99–01 Carolyn Schwarz  
01–03 Terry Kennedy  
03–05 Flo Chapman  
05–07 Jane Siegel  
07–09 Jean Kablack  
09–11 Suzan Hauptman  
11–13 Carol Woolford  
13–15 Susan Cohen  
15–17 Laura Arnold  
17–19 Laura Fehl  
19–21 Susan Blackman  
21–23 Carol Woolford

### Sisterhood

87–90 Phyllis Spatz  
89–90 Mayda Roth  
87–90 Mimi Blye  
84–87 Estelle Mann  
82–84 Marjorie Krasne  
82–84 Edith Ekstrand  
80–82 Delores Smooke  
78–80 Eleanor Blum  
74–76 Florence Katz  
73–74 Directorate  
72–73 Madelynne Dunn  
71–72 Pearl Gross  
69–71 Shirley Waldman  
67–69 Sara Bernstein  
65–67 Nathlyn Diamondstone

63–65 Pearl Gross  
61–63 Florence Abrams  
59–61 Helen Spirer  
57–59 Rachel Porter  
55–57 Florence Leebov  
54–55 Minnie Litman  
52–54 Mollie Rothman  
51–52 Florence Marcus  
49–51 Lillian Holstein  
48–49 Leah Solomon  
46–48 Esther Landau

