

Zelda Jacobson Schwartz '61

Outstanding Service Award



Zelda Jacobson Schwartz is a retired psychotherapist and former director of Family Therapy at Jewish Family Service in Worcester, Mass. She received her MSW at Washington University in St. Louis in 1963 and completed post-graduate training at the Ackermann Institute for Family Therapy in New York City. The recipient of several community service awards, she was recognized for her exceptional work with challenging and multigenerational families. Zelda's motto has always been "anything worth doing was worth doing well."

Like all young women who came of age in the late 1950s, she entered college at a time when expectations for women, both professionally and personally, were limited to teaching, nursing, social work and motherhood. "I grew up in the Tupperware Generation," she quips.

Skidmore, however, provided an exciting intellectual environment and the opportunity to develop "a sense of one's personhood" prior to becoming a wife and mother. She flourished academically under the guidance of Dr. Elizabeth Ferguson, who developed undergraduate courses in social work and internships during senior year, and Dr. Everett Stonequist, who was famous for his research on racial relationships and the concept of the "marginal man." The rigorous curriculum at Skidmore enabled Zelda to smoothly transition to graduate level study.

"I loved my life at Skidmore: living in Ross, then two years in Moore Hall and my senior year in Skidmore Hall," she recalls. "I remember getting ready to go skiing at some ungodly hour to fill a gym requirement and listening to Rabbi Malino's speeches at Vespers." (His daughter, Fran, was a classmate.)

Meeting Betty Friedan, author of "The Feminine Mystique," in 1963 was a transformational moment for Zelda. A seminal text of the feminist movement, it had originated in Friedan's acute awareness of the profound discontent felt by many of her Smith College peers 15 years after graduation. The ideas in it struck a chord with educated young women everywhere.

Zelda reconnected with Skidmore during the leadup to her 20th Reunion in 1981, when she was approached about offering a workshop on "Changing Times for Women." At that time, Skidmore was still undergoing the transition to co-education and building its new campus. She led the first discussion group, which soon earned the moniker "Zelda's Thing." Presented at every Reunion since, these conversational seminars offer classmates the opportunity to share and celebrate their journey throughout life's chapters.

In addition to facilitating this special forum, Zelda is a longtime class agent and has served as class president for the last 10 years. She celebrates her 60th Reunion in that role.

Returning to Skidmore periodically has also enhanced her enjoyment of the new campus as well as the city of Saratoga Springs.

Now retired after a rich and fulfilling career, Zelda and husband Paul, a retired physician, are active with WISE, a lifelong learning institute in Worcester, Mass. Both exercise daily and are proud of a "wall of honor" commemorating over 40 years of road racing in half-marathons across the country. Over the past year, both have participated in virtual runs for charity fundraisers. Zelda and Paul are proud of their three daughters, five granddaughters and a grandson.

These days, Zelda's life is focused on "the art of getting good at getting older." The topic of the class 60th Reunion discussion, Zelda is sure to approach it with lively wit and good humor.

For this dedicated volunteer, Skidmore has become a family affair. Her legacy family includes cousin **Leslie Jacobson Kaye '84**, nephew **Ian Clark '07** and granddaughter **Ayla '25**.