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Faith Hope Consolo, a Force in Retail Real Estate, Is Dead at 73

By Julie Satow

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Faith Hope Consolo, who as the chairwoman of Douglas Elliman's retail group was one of New York City's most prolific retail real estate brokers, died on Dec. 23 at her home in Manhattan. She was 73.

A spokesman for Douglas Elliman confirmed the death but did not specify the cause.

A mainstay in the clubby world of New York real estate, Ms. Consolo was responsible for luring numerous luxury retailers to Manhattan. Among her clients were Cartier, Versace, Louis Vuitton and Yves Saint Laurent; she also represented some of New York's best-known landlords, including Donald Trump and Larry Silverstein.

The properties she handled included the Cartier mansion, on Fifth Avenue between 51st and 52nd Streets, and the nearby Zara flagship store.

"Faith was a driving and iconic force in New York City's retail sector," Steven James, president of Douglas Elliman's New York City region, said in a statement. "Her contribution to the real estate world was immense." Ms. Consolo was on the board of the Association of Real Estate Women and founded the AREW Charitable Fund.

Ms. Consolo, who called herself the "Queen of Retail," was known for her outsize personality and her love of publicity. Her name was splashed across vacant shop windows from Madison Avenue to SoHo. Her ubiquitous tagline, "You Need Faith," was imprinted on everything from her business cards to the pink nail files she sent clients for the holidays.

But despite her larger-than-life persona, Ms. Consolo was exceedingly private, and many details about her personal life remain unknown — even to those closest to her.

An only child, she was born in Shaker Heights, Ohio, on July 25, 1945, and moved to Westport, Conn., as a young girl. Her father, John, who ran a real estate business, died when she was 2; her mother, Jill, a child psychiatrist, died when she was 12; and she was raised mostly by her grandmother, according to Joseph Aquino, who was her business partner for 26 years.

No immediate family members survive.

Ms. Consolo studied art history at New York University and also attended Parsons School of Design. In the late 1970s, she married and moved to Malibu, Calif. While there, she opened an interior design business in Beverly Hills, decorating movie studios and the homes of film stars, according to an interview she gave in 2005. But the marriage was short-lived, and after her divorce Ms. Consolo returned to New York.

“I had a failed marriage behind me,” she said. “I had been good in design, but not good enough to be in the top tier. I wasn’t quite sure what I wanted to do.”

Mr. Aquino said: “She was a world-class shopper, she knew all the stores in Europe, and she wanted to go into real estate. So a friend suggested that she work with retailers.”

In 1985, Ms. Consolo met the owner of a firm called 2001 Real Estate and took a part-time job there cold-calling landlords and retailers, hoping to find vacant stores and shopkeepers who wanted to lease them. So great was her knack for deal-making that she was soon recruited by the retail powerhouse Garrick-Aug Worldwide. She remained there for nearly two decades, eventually becoming vice chairwoman. She joined Douglas Elliman in 2005.

Early in her career, Ms. Consolo met Jerome Sidel, a Wall Street broker and financial consultant, when she showed him a rental property and then offered to walk his dog. The pair were together for decades, although Ms. Consolo rarely discussed their relationship.

“She was relentless in her pursuit of her brand; that was her world, her brand in real estate,” said Adam Sidel, Jerome’s son from a previous marriage, referring to Ms. Consolo’s constant efforts to publicize her business. “Aside from that, it was my father. They were deeply committed for more than 30 years.”

The younger Mr. Sidel said he did not know much about Ms. Consolo, “as surprising as that may be, considering she was effectively my stepmother.” He said that he did not even know if his father had ever married Ms. Consolo, although she was known as Mrs. Sidel in her personal life.

Ms. Consolo could be brash and outspoken, which sometimes led to conflict. In 2015, her partnership with Mr. Aquino dissolved over a dispute regarding commissions. Adam Sidel became estranged from her after his father died in 2011.

“She was smart and complicated and challenging,” Mr. Sidel said. “She didn’t embarrass easily. She did what she wanted to do, maybe regardless of the outcome.”

When she died, Ms. Consolo was in the midst of several deals. “We were actually in negotiations right now for a Madison Avenue property,” said Norman Sturner, the chairman of MHP Real Estate Services. “She was a force — a retailing force. If you wanted to get a store, you had to have Faith.”