



Mrs. Mary Norman Tomlin Harris

October 13, 1923 - May 27, 2020

Mary Norman Tomlin Harris, beloved wife of the late Benton Neal Harris Jr.; dear mother of Benton Neal Harris III (Ann), Peter Tomlin Harris (Harriet), Mallory Maxwell Harris Kubicek (Kirk), Mary Katherine Norman Harris, and Margaret Moore Harris; devoted sister of Joyce Tomlin Griffith; Also survived by nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Those desiring to make memorials are encouraged to donate to The Normie & Neal Harris Family Fund for Baltimore (online at <https://www.bcf.org/harris>) or via mailed check with the fund name on the memo line to Baltimore Community Foundation, P.O. Box 37422, Baltimore, MD 21298-9388.

Mary Norman “Normie” Tomlin Harris

Community builder, advocate for many Mary Noman “Normie” Tomlin Harris, a 75-year resident of Baltimore who created supports so that citizens with mental health challenges or homelessness could flourish, died of natural causes on May 27 at age 96 in her home, Blakehurst in Ruxton.

Born in 1923 and raised in Statesville, North Carolina, Normie attended Salem College and moved to Baltimore in 1946 to marry Benton Neal Harris. She became an advocate for some of the city’s most vulnerable citizens, supported their mental health needs, provided homes and jobs for the poor, helped

improve daycare for children, and served as vocational counselor while raising their five children and living a life informed by a deep and engaged faith.

Normie found hilarity in her daily encounters. She was known for her natural ability to reach out, celebrate, inspire others, and recognize their best. While her children were young, Normie and longtime friend, Dottie Stieff, were professional puppeteers for productions at birthday parties, Goucher's Kraushaar Auditorium, and WJZ. "She lives on in our lives. My son met lots of my friends through the years, but said that Normie had an aura", friend, Lois Schenck, offered.

In the 1960's and early 70's, as members of the Church of the Savior, Washington, DC, Normie's energetic leadership led her and Neal to become a founding members of Kittamaquindi Community, an ecumenical Christian church in Columbia, MD, that continues today. Compelled by commitment to social activism, she pursued a master's degree in psychology and career development at Antioch College, and also worked for the Rouse Company as Community Relations Director for the Village of Cross Keys.

Normie and Neal worked together to assist 30 families from being evicted from their homes in Butchers Hill. This led to the 1980 establishment of Jubilee Baltimore, Inc. and Jubilee Jobs, a compassionate, professional placement organization that served 2,000 individuals locally. Jubilee Baltimore continues to build safe, stable, historic, attractive, diverse neighborhoods today .

While Normie was active on the board of Sheppard Pratt in the 1980's, she recognized the need for supportive housing and services for newly released patients re-entering the community. "I think I'm a person who likes responsibility more than recreation," she told Carol Edelman, reporter for the former Baltimore Messenger, .."the only way anything will be changed is by

being willing to take it on". She convened a board, financial donors and established the Transitional Living Council of Maryland (TLC) that then opened the first two halfway houses in Maryland in Charles Village as well as Shapiro Training Employment Placement. "Normie was a founder and Chairman of the Transitional Living Council when I was hired as Executive Director in 1988, wrote Harry Schwarz, Chief Development Officer for Maryland Community Health Initiatives, Inc. (Penn North)...a woman of grace and charm, she leaves a legacy in the many persons who were well-served by Transitions." Also a 50-year sustaining member of the Junior League of Baltimore and its Larks singing group, Normie enlisted League members in various projects, halfway houses included.

At St. John's Episcopal Church, Glyndon, while Normie was in charge of adult education, she enlisted members to spend one night a week at Barnabas House homeless shelter in the city. There she met men who wanted to re-establish their lives, so she brought together the YWCA and the Mayor's office to form Hope for the Homeless to help settle families and individuals as they left shelters. "I love the spirit of cooperation that exists when you just give people an opportunity to help out," Normie said, "we're pleased with the response!"

One night, Normie was on her way to dear friends' house for dinner. Just before she got to the door, a robber accosted her and demanded she give him her wallet. She handed it over, saying, "You probably need this more than I, but could you give me my new doctor's prescription in it? I need that". He said, 'thank you', and handed it over! "Normie recognized and embraced the glimmer of hope for equity that is so hard to find amidst the chaos," a dear friend pinpointed. She folded others into the homes in which we lived, and invited friends to bring friends sight unseen to wonderful, conversational dinners. She relished the theatre

and acting, James Taylor, Mozart, Bach, Frank Sinatra, the ballet, Jim Henson's muppets, Garrison Keillor, folk music, fine authors and Ann Tyler, Martha's Vineyard, Sanibel and Harbour Islands, Lake Sunapee, the Poconos, her old dogs and cats, and dancing.

Normie Harris loved life and her family on all sides - grands, great-grands, and had friends of all ages including babies. She was a fearless advocate for those in need and never hesitated to reach out for help - whether it was making curtains, raising funds, visiting politicians, or doing puppet shows - all with love in her heart. She was the best mentor and friend anyone could have had, a sheer joy. Lucky us.

Normie is survived by two sons: Benton Neal Harris III (with Ann), and Peter Tomlin Harris (with Harriet); three daughters: Mallory Maxwell Harris Kubicek (with Kirk), Mary Katherine Norman Harris, and Margaret Moore Harris; a devoted sister, Joyce Tomlin Griffith, who lives in Cockeysville; nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

A proposed Memorial service date is confirmed for 11AM, September 18th at The Church of the Redeemer, 5603 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD, 21210.

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Previous Events

Memorial Service

SEP **18**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Church of the Redeemer
5603 N Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21210

Tribute Wall

PE

“ *she was a loving family member to all who got to see her, and all who knew her!*

she was my fantastic grandmother what I wouldn't give to bring all those memories back, have a lunch with her at blakehurst terrace room, just one more time!

*I miss her every single day.
I have been seeing mourning doves as well so I think that she is doing great in the pearly gates!*

I accept her passing of course but I still don't feel like it, but its fine life goes on and we all go with it

*as you would always say to me,
I send my love to you!*



peter - September 22, 2020 at 03:57 PM

NC

“ *Such a loving woman that seized the joy of life everyday. She was my "happy fairy" and never failed to take my mood to a better place. I'm so delighted to have had Normie in my life. As her daughter Mallory can tell you, we had a special relationship during her last years at Blakehurst, Together we shared things like music, puppetry and endless laughter. I know that heaven is celebrating the fact that this incredible child of God has come home...but I will miss your presence my dear friend. Nancy Cramer*

Nancy Cramer - June 14, 2020 at 09:06 PM

HS

“ Normie was a founder and Chairman of the Board of the Transitional Living Council of Central Maryland when i was hired as Executive Director in 1988. Also known as Transitions, the program provided residential, rehabilitation, and support services to persons with mental illness, with Charles Village Halfway House its centerpiece.

She was a leader and a doer, bringing together a remarkable Board, funding support from many leading Baltimore foundations and donors, and a partnership with the Junior League. A woman of grace and charm, she leaves a legacy in the many persons who were well-served by Transitions.

As a first time Executive Director, Normie was a seminal figure in my life. She taught me much about organizing and leadership and supported my own growth as a human service professional. I shall always remember her and honor her service.

Harry Schwarz - June 14, 2020 at 12:33 PM