



Mrs. Nannie Mitchell Koppelman (Kopper)

April 30, 1922 - February 27, 2020

Nannie Poultney Mitchell Koppelman

Nannie Mitchell Koppelman (Kopper), a 27-year veteran of Planned Parenthood Association of Maryland and mother of five, died of natural causes Feb 27 at Roland Park Place. She was 97. (Cause of death listed on the death certificate was “Failure to Thrive.”) Mrs. Koppelman was an avid sports enthusiast and sailor, once competing in the US Figure Skating national championships. She played tennis until her early 80s and for many years sailed out of Gibson Island, where her father managed the Gibson Island Corporation between World Wars 1 & II.

After the birth of her fifth child, she was approached in 1960 by her friend Dr. Francis Trimble, the medical director of Planned Parenthood, who recruited her under the guise of introducing her to the concept of birth control. Mrs. Koppelman subsequently worked at Planned Parenthood, first as a volunteer and then as a paid staff member. “When I started, the agency's headquarters were in a row house on 25th Street,” she once recalled. “By the time I retired in 1986, the organization's headquarters were a large building on Howard Street, with six branch clinics throughout the state.”

Mrs. Koppelman remembered regular appearances of protestors at the Howard Street facility. “There was ‘praying Jack’, who would lie on the floor at the clinic entrance hall,” she said. “We had to step over him and avoid making any physical contact. If he was touched, the protestors would accuse us of assault.”

“While she was working at Planned Parenthood, our friends would come to our Roland Park home for secret birth control and pregnancy counseling,” recalled her son, Mitch. “Reluctant to have these conversations with their own parents, they knew she would help them and trusted her to protect their confidentiality, which she did” he said. In 1986, she was presented with a Margaret Sanger Award by Planned Parenthood Association of Maryland.

Born April 30, 1922, to Rear Admiral Charles W. Mitchell, Jr., and Nannie Braxton Dallam, both of Baltimore, she was raised with her sister and two brothers in a three-generation household built in 1915 by her maternal grandparents at 4001 Greenway in Guilford. She said her immediate family, as well as her father's sister and mother, all lived there out of necessity in the wake of the stock market crash of 1929.

She attended Calvert School, Roland Park Public (RPS 233) and graduated from Bryn Mawr School in 1940. She was the Bryn Mawr 1940 class secretary until her death. She was presented at the Bachelors' Cotillion in 1940 and attended Bryn Mawr College for two years, then transferred to the University of Oklahoma, where her father was stationed with the US Navy in 1942.

When Carlin's Park opened the first area ice-rink in 1933, she began skating. In 1938, she competed in the US Figure Skating National championships in Philadelphia. She remained a member of the Ice Club of Baltimore and of the Baltimore Figure Skating Club until her 70's.

During World War II, the family lived in Jacksonville, Florida, and Norman, Oklahoma, where the Navy had assigned her father. She met her husband, Baltimore native John Van Cortlandt Koppelman, in Norman while attending the University of Oklahoma, where Mr. Koppelman, a U.S. Army Lieutenant, was teaching ROTC. They married in 1943 and lived in Paris, Texas and Lake Charles, LA. At war's end, they returned to Baltimore and raised their family. John Koppelman died in 1996.

In 1998, she married Dr. John Matthias Kopper, a retired professor of electrical engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Kopper died in January 2013.

While raising her family in Roland Park, Mrs. Koppelman frequently took in schoolchildren who lived too far away for a daily commute, including a French foreign exchange student attending Gilman School.

Mrs. Koppelman's wry sense of humor was frequently aimed at politics. When President Nixon announced plans in 1970 to spray marijuana fields with the herbicide Paraquat, which was toxic to humans, Mrs. Kopper obtained marijuana seeds from her children and planted her own crop in the garden at their home on Keswick Rd., declaring that she refused to let Mr. Nixon poison her children. For a short time, she provided them with a home-grown, toxin-free supply. When the Watergate scandal felled President Nixon, she carried her miniature Sony television set from room to room, so as not to miss a minute of the Senate hearings.

She was amused by outlandish claims made by politicians. When then presidential candidate Ronald Reagan declared he planned to increase military spending, cut taxes and balance the federal budget, she asked "how would that work, exactly?" knowing full well it was an economic impossibility. Reagan's GOP opponent, George H W Bush, apparently agreed with her assessment, a short time later labeling Reagan's plan "voodoo economics," a term that still resonates in Washington political circles to this day. Her contrarian view of Republican economic orthodoxy caused her husband's many conservative friends' heads to spin.

Mrs. Koppelman was a charter member of the Baltimore Scottish Country Dancers, where she served as secretary and president and occasionally conducted classes. She was a member of the Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Hamilton Street Club, Mount Vernon Club, Gibson Island Club and the L'Hirondelle Club. She played tennis until she was 82 years old and spent many years sailing the family sloop Coracle out of Gibson Island, plying the rivers and creeks along the Chesapeake Bay with family and friends.

She collected Quimper china, enjoyed needlepoint, knitting, puzzles, and bridge.

She is survived by her brother, Braxton D. Mitchell, of Ruxton, MD. and four children: Lucy K. Saunders of Weston, MA; A. Mitchell Koppelman, of Towson, MD.; Lawrence D. Koppelman, of Rollinsville, CO., Grace K. Drown of Wayne, ME; two step-children: Dr. John Kopper, Jr., of Norwich, VT.; Lula B. Kopper of Arlington, MA; nine grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, ten nephews and two nieces. She was preceded in death by her daughter Elizabeth K. White, her brother Charles W. Mitchell III and her sister Betty Braxton Andrews.

In lieu of flowers, donations should be made to Planned Parenthood Association of Maryland, Inc., or the Bryn Mawr School, of Baltimore.

On February 27, 2020 Nannie Mitchell Koppelman beloved wife of the late John Van Cortlandt Koppelman and John Matthias Kopper; mother of Lucy K. Saunders, Lawrence D. Koppelman, A. Mitchell Koppelman, Grace F. K. Drown and the late Elizabeth K. White; mother-in-law of Philip Saunders, Jr., Stephen M. White, Sandra Hollingsworth, Joanna E. P. Greenwood and the late Scott K. Drown. She is also survived by nine grandchildren.

Please omit flowers. Memorials in her name may be made to Planned Parenthood of

Maryland or Bryn Mawr School.