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Mary-jane R. Snyder

Mary-jane R. Snyder, president of Mj Enterprises, an international communications and public relations consulting firm, and one of twenty-eight women of vision who, in 1966, met during the National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women and founded the Organization of Women (NOW), died Saturday, October 27, 2007, at the age of 91.

A lifelong and outspoken proponent for equality for women, the former newspaper woman came into the family planning field on a free lance assignment for Planned Parenthood-Chicago Area, and then served as its first public relations director (1959-1970). During her tenure there, Snyder was instrumental in breaking through Cook County Hospital's "de facto" ban on birth control by getting legislation passed making Illinois the first state to allow state-payment for birth control services for the poor. She became executive director of PPA-CA in 1974 and left in 1978 to launch her own population communications consulting firm.

Snyder was appointed in 1964 by Governor Otto Kerner to the (IL) Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. She coordinated the public relations component for ratification of the ERA in Illinois. For better than a decade she trained several thousand health care professionals from developing countries to build awareness of family size and to establish family planning clinics in their own countries through Bogue Workshop at the University of Chicago Community and Family Study Center.

She was part of the pressroom for the first United Nations conference on population held in Bucharest (1974), and subsequent conferences in Mexico City, New Delhi, Sri Lanka, and Geneva. She ran a special press service at the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and the UN Women's Conferences in Cairo and Mexico City. Snyder served as chair of Population Institute in Washington, DC, was a founding board member of Population Communications International and several other organizations whose focus is to increase world-wide awareness of the impact of overpopulation on a finite planet.

Snyder was active in Theta Sigma Phi both locally and nationally and continued through its reorganization as Women in Communications International. Mentoring present journalists was part of her commitment to the truth and future of journalism.

Her unconquerable spirit both inspired and empowered friends, colleagues, and acquaintances alike to reach higher in their personal and collective goals. She was a devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who took each of her five grandchildren on "kindertrips," international adventures to introduce them to the world's diverse cultures.

Born to Edward G. and Florence (James) Ryan on 25 July 1916 in Chicago's Hyde Park, she was an eager student and avid Girl Scout, selling the most cookies in the first Girl Scout Cookie Sale held in Chicago. She was a 1933 graduate of Hyde Park High School, and earned her

degree in Journalism in 1938 from the University of Illinois. In 1939, she married graphic arts designer, Clark Quin Snyder in Chicago with whom she enjoyed an enviable marriage until his death in 1970. Snyder moved to Wilmette from Hyde Park in 1947 with her husband, two young children and extended family, John Rayner and his four year old daughter, Betsy. There, Snyder became active in the community through the schools, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, Girl Scouts, North Shore Associates, LINKS, New Trier Mental Health Advisory Board, and many other organizations. Mrs. Snyder moved to Westminster Place, Evanston in May 2001, and remained active in Mj Enterprises until her death.

Mrs. Snyder is survived by her children: Lindsay (James) Cantoni of Sun Lakes, AZ; Nadine (Richard) Baldwin of Cape Elizabeth, ME; Kevan Snyder, Atlanta, GA; Courtney (Lawrence) Waite, Onalaska, WI; Elizabeth Rayner (Edward) Cox, Sanford, FL; grandchildren: Brian (Lauren) Cantoni, Kara Cantoni, Colleen (Ryan) Danner, Rebecca (Arturo) Cacayuran, Alexander Waite; two great-grandchildren, Emma and Elizabeth Cantoni. She is also survived by her sister, Joanne Johnson Fraedrich, Dallas, TX; sister-in-law, Eleanor Snyder Schwecke, Seattle, WA; five nephews and two nieces. She is predeceased by her parents, husband, and sisters, Joyce Ryan, and Jannette Ryan Fraedrich and one great-grandchild, Angel Cantoni.

Snyder was the recipient of innumerable awards, professional and otherwise-for outstanding achievement and humanitarian contribution including, Golden Trumpet Award from the Publicity Club of Chicago, Rotary's Paul Harris award, several Helen Cody Baker awards, National Headliner Award from Theta Sigma Phi, Girl Scout's highest award, the Golden Eaglet, and one on which, was inscribed the sentiment by all who knew her: "Thank God for Mary-jane."

Visitation Tuesday, 4:30 to 7 p.m. at Wm. H. Scott Funeral Home, 1100 Greenleaf Ave., Wilmette. Funeral Wednesday, Oct. 31, 2007, 2:00 p.m. at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, 1140 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, IL 60091. Interment private. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Augustine's Episcopal Church; Planned Parenthood Association - Chicago, 18 S. Michigan Avenue, 6th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60603; Pathfinder International, 9 Galen St, Ste 217, Watertown, MA 02472; Family Care International, 588 Broadway, Ste 503, NY,NY 10012.