

Dr. Nancy Jean Cahen Knopka was born in New York City on September 26, 1926, and died at her home in Woodmere, NY, on August 18, 2010. Dr. Knopka taught Spanish language and literature for 30 years at Stern College for Women and later at Rutgers University. A founding member of the Cervantes Society of America, Dr. Knopka was a member of the New York City musicians' union (American Federation of Musicians, Local 802) for 50 years.

Dr. Knopka graduated from Barnard College in 1947 with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and earned a master's degree in Spanish from Columbia University in 1948. She received her doctorate from New York University in 1981. In her doctoral thesis, "The 'Royal Production' in the Quijote," she combined her love of classical music with her appreciation for the work of Cervantes. The thesis is in the New York University library.

Her master's thesis, "Estanislao del Campo, Gaucho Poet (1834–1880)" is in the Columbia University library. Her essay "Jorge Luis Borges on the Nature of Man" (co-authored with Wayne H. Finke and Enrique Ledesma) was published in "Homenaje a Humberto Pinera: Estudios de Literatura, Arte e Historia" (Madrid, Spain: Playor, 1979).

Dr. Knopka trained as a bassoonist with the National Orchestral Association under music director Leon Barzin from 1945 to 1951. She married Dr. Felipe Knopka in 1951 and lived in Havana, Cuba, where she was the principal bassoonist with the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra during 1957–1958. She returned to the states in 1960 and was divorced in 1961. In recent years, Dr. Knopka played bassoon and contrabassoon with several community bands, including most recently the North Shore Pops Band. She also wrote poetry.