



Valerie Raleigh Yow, 89, passed away Thursday, May 23, 2024, in Oxford, MS. She was born on June 29, 1934 in Greensboro, NC to Fletcher and Mae Moore Yow. She graduated from UNC-Greensboro in 1956 with a BA in English where she studied with the poet Randall Jarrell, who was a great influence on her future career as a writer and oral historian. She often talked about attending the small poetry reading groups he hosted in his house. She went north to study for her PhD in European history at the University of Wisconsin which she received in 1967. There she met and married fellow student Richard Quinney, and during thirty years of marriage they lived and worked in various locations and raised their family. Living in New York's Greenwich Village in the 1960s, Valerie was active in the civil rights and peace movements. After a move to Providence, RI, she studied at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and received a Master of Psychology degree at Boston College in the early 1980s.

Her passion for story-telling translated into a lifelong calling to record the oral histories of others. Her first oral history project involved interviewing three generations of women mill workers in Carrboro, NC, which she published as “Families of Carrboro,” in 1974–1975. She trained interviewers and conducted interviews for the project on the history of clerical workers in Rhode Island, sponsored by the national organization, 9 to 5. She taught history at the University of Rhode Island, Brooklyn College, and Northern Illinois University. She taught workshops on oral history for over fifty years and was a consultant on oral history projects. She was Associate Director of the State Oral History Project in Rhode Island and served the Oral History Association as Book Review Editor for the *Oral History Review* and as a member of the governing council of the Oral History Association. She was also a member of the International Oral History Association. Her book, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, now in its third edition, was selected by The American Library Association for

its list, “Outstanding Academic Titles” for both the 2006 and 2015 editions. Valerie’s articles have been re-published in *The Oral History Reader* and in *The Handbook of Oral History*. Among her publications of research based on oral history are: *Patient Care: A History of Butler Hospital, 1957–1993* (1994); *Bryant College: The First 100 Years* (1993); *The History of Hera: A Women’s Cooperative Art Gallery* (1990).

She researched extensively the lives of women writers of the South and wrote two major biographies of North Carolinian women writers, *Bernice Kelly Harris: A Good Life Was Writing* and *Betty Smith: Life of the Author of A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.

Valerie pursued other passions, writing plays and painting. Her play about the 1918 influenza epidemic, *In the Service of Others*, won first place in the Great Chicago Playwrights Exposition and was produced at the Body Politic Theater in 1987. Love Creek Productions, New York, produced her play, *Past Tense/Present Tense* in February 1995. Her play *Betty Smith Meets Carl Jung: Some Memories, Dreams, Reflections* was produced in Chapel Hill, NC in 2004 for the 20th anniversary of the Jung Society of the Triangle where she was member. She was a practicing psychotherapist in Chapel Hill for many years after she retired from her teaching career.

She is survived by two daughters, Anne Quinney (Bryan Smyth) of Oxford, MS and Laura Quinney (William Flesch) of Arlington, MA as well as four grandchildren, Daniel and Julian Flesch and Fyntan and Aurélia Quinney Smyth, her sister-in-law, Jan Yow of Greensboro, NC, and two nephews, Tommy and Michael Yow of Greensboro, NC and many, many friends.

A memorial service will be held in Chapel Hill on Friday, May 31, at 2:30pm at the Seymour Senior Center. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Chapel Hill Historical Society, PO Box 9032, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, and will be earmarked for oral history projects in which Valerie was involved.