

VALERIE JOURNEAUX HARVEY POWELL

Born on April 26, 1938 in Racine, Wisconsin to Richard G. and Mary Lou Harvey, Valerie Journeaux Harvey Powell passed away on November 5, 2023 at the Bethel Park Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Pittsburgh, PA.

A dedicated professor and researcher and a determined advocate of progressive causes, Valerie passed away after a valiant effort to recover from a grievous head injury suffered in a fall.

Valerie began her education at the rural, one-room Wind Point Elementary School where she excelled and discovered her love of learning. In 1955 she graduated from William Horlick High School in Racine, WI. She then enrolled at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN and in 1959 obtained her B.A. in Language and Philosophy. She spent her junior year in college as an exchange student at Albert Ludwigs Universitat in Freiberg im Breggau where she advanced her mastery of spoken and written German.

From 1959-62 Valerie attended the University of Texas-Austin where she obtained a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Philosophy. She later completed an M.S. in Computer Science in 1980 at Texas A&M University-Commerce. In 2002 she became a Registered Radiologic Technician RT(R).

Valerie enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a university level teacher where she reinvented herself adapting to the trends and needs of higher education. She began her career in 1966 teaching German at Texas A&M University in Commerce, TX. She later shifted to teaching English and Philosophy and then in the 1980s made a career move into the burgeoning field of computer science.

In 1990, she assumed an appointment as professor of Computer and Information Systems at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, PA. There, in addition to teaching computer science she also offered classes in discrete math. After retiring in 2015, she remained a Professor Emerita at RMU allowing her to continue to pursue her research and publication interests.

In all of these academic realms Valerie dedicated herself to being an effective, demanding, and inspiring teacher who sought to prepare her students for successful careers and productive community engagement. At times her absorption in her work led her to neglect practical details in her life and thus appear as the classic "absent minded professor."

Throughout her life Valerie was a crusader and pioneer for causes that she believed improved the community. During high school, she home-printed and distributed a newspaper, The Wind Point Beacon, in an effort to facilitate community information sharing. During her teaching career in Texas, she engaged students in community activities and language clubs. She later became a passionate advocate of bi-lingual education.

After her switch to the computer science field, she was influential in developing computer systems for medical records and for air traffic control systems. Most recently and up to the time of her passing, she continued to research, publish articles, edit books, and champion the integration of medical and dental records as way to significantly improve the quality of health care.

Perhaps her most important pioneering effort came in the personal realm when she acknowledged her true identity as a woman and successfully and gracefully transitioned to a female during a time when such transitions were less recognized and accepted. Based on this personal journey, she became a strong advocate for transgender rights and by extension for the rights of all political, social, ethnic, and gender minorities.

Throughout her life, Valerie displayed remarkable determination and perseverance. After suffering polio as a child and undergoing a long and arduous recovery, she regained her physical strength and fitness by riding her fat-wheeled, three-speed Schwinn Phantom down the windswept roads of southeastern Wisconsin for 30, 40, and even 50 miles in a day. This same determination allowed her to meet all of her educational and career goals.

In 1961 Valerie (William at the time), married Kay Jacobson from Austin, TX. They raised two sons, David and Michael. They provided an intellectually stimulating family life that included board games, travel abroad, camping and outdoor adventures, support of religious education, and an early introduction to computers. Kay predeceased Valerie in 2016.

Valerie is survived by her sons, David Harvey of Honesdale, PA and Michael Harvey of Austin, TX; and her brothers Timothy Harvey of Naples, FL and John Harvey of Honesdale, PA. In addition, Valerie is also survived by her grandchildren, Orion Queer-Harvey of Los Angeles, CA, Claire Harvey of Laguna Niguel, CA, Zachary Harvey of Austin, TX, Eli Harvey of Sacramento, CA, and Alex Harvey of Austin, TX.

After her transition, Valerie married Jay Powell, Ph.D. Together, they enjoyed sharing their academic interests, presenting around the world at academic and scientific conferences, and traveling throughout the United States. Jay predeceased Valerie in 2018.

Valerie's infectious enthusiasm and unflagging determination for learning, teaching, and improving the life of her community will be greatly missed. Her dry sense of humor and intense enjoyment of everyday activities will also be missed.

Valerie was a long standing and deeply engaged member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills in Pittsburgh, PA. It is at this lovely church and in the presence of her spiritual and social community of friends and fellow worshipers that a memorial celebration of life will be held on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 1 p.m. All are welcome. For those unable to attend in person the service will be livestreamed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/UUCSH> and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@sunnyhilluuchurchofthesout3754>.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Valerie's name to the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills at <https://sunnyhill.breezechms.com/give/online>. If you wish to donate please choose the Valerie Powell Memorial Fund in the drop down menu. Arrangements by BEINHAUER. Please add and view tributes at www.beinhauer.com.