

# Cecily Rideout McNeil, 99

Cecily Rideout McNeil, 99, died of natural causes on Oct. 5, 2023.

Cecily was born in San Francisco in 1923. Her father, Henry Milner Rideout, a novelist, was from a Maine family which came to California in the Gold Rush and ran steamboats on the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and a gold dust business in the Central Valley. Her mother, Frances Reed Rideout, was the daughter of the first minister of Christ Church, Sausalito. Cecily's siblings were Clara Avery Rideout and Henty M. Rideout, Jr.

After the untimely death of the father, the family moved to Ross, Marin County, and lived there until the outbreak of World War II. Cecily and her sister attended The Katharine Branson School in that town, and later, Cecily went to Pomona College in Claremont, California, for two years and graduated from U.C. Berkeley in pre-med, in 1945. Aiming for a career in medical librarianship, she earned a second bachelor's degree, in library science, at the University of Illinois in Urbana in 1948.

While there, she met her future husband, Edward Bowen McNeil, who was then a doctoral candidate in physics at the same school. They married in 1948, in Ross, California, and settled in the Urbana, Illinois area while Edward was an instructor and worked towards his Ph. D. Their two children were born in Urbana: Alan Rideout McNeil, and Bruce Bowen McNeil.

In 1953, Edward took a teaching post at the University of Illinois in Chicago and the family moved to that city, where they lived until 1990. After the children were on their own, Cecily went back to college for several years, obtaining a Master of Arts in the History of Chinese painting from the University of Chicago. She then taught at Triton College near Chicago and later also at FVCC in Kalispell, in the Community program.

Other activities were singing alto in the choir of St Thomas the Apostle Church in Hyde Park, Chicago, and ten years of volunteer work at the Flathead County Library. Cecily was also a published poet (Poetry Magazine and other periodicals, plus two chapbooks.)

Cecily planned, compiled and edited The North Fork Cookbook, which went through several editions. Proceeds have always been used for North Fork land use planning efforts, including postage for an early zoning petition vote of North Fork landowners.

From 1959 the McNeil family spent summers on the North Fork of the Flathead River in Montana, and came to consider the area their second home. In 1973, concerned about overdevelopment in the North Fork, Cecily and Edward helped to found the North Fork Compact, a pioneer land covenant restricting commercial development and excessive subdivision on the lands of the signatories.



In 1990, Edward and Cecily retired to Kalispell. Their grandchildren and great-grandchild visited them there and went huckleberrying and hiking. They are: Henry Chesna McNeil, Fiona Reed McNeil; Lieutenant Commander (USCG) Anna Crandall McNeil, Ellie Rideout McNeil, and Edward Bowen McNeil II; and Brooklyn Avery England.