Frances Levison Low, one of the first women to be recognized as a reporter at the Time-Life organization and a long-time resident of New York, died in San Francisco after a short illness at age 92.

After attending Horace Mann for 12 years, graduating from Vassar College (class of ’41) with honors and earning an MA in History from Columbia University, Frances started as a researcher with Life Magazine. When she left the Time-Life organization in 1952, Frances was a full-fledged reporter and the lone woman reporter among the Time Washington Bureau staff. She worked in New York and Chicago, and after WWII in London, Paris, and Washington, D.C.

Among her memorable articles for Life Magazine was an intimate study of Elizabeth Taylor who at age 17 was coming on the Hollywood scene as perhaps its most glamorous ingénue. Another was an in-depth study of Margaret Truman, daughter of former President Harry S. Truman. Frances also wrote of her experience as a student at Le Cordon Bleu Cooking School in Paris in which she described the peeling of a live eel among the culinary techniques of the French kitchen. This article, accompanied by a photograph of the chef performing the slippery operation, caught the eye of fellow student, Julia Child. Frances spent several nights in an Illinois prison for women to write an article about the inmates, many of them incarcerated because of violence against abusive husbands or boyfriends. She was forever moved by the screams and moans she heard in those nights behind bars.

Frances left the Time-Life organization in 1952 to marry Robert A. Low, then an officer in the U. S. Department of State. She became a Special Assistant to Henry M. Jackson, Democratic Senator from Washington state. She and her husband became lifelong friends of Sen. Jackson.

Frances and ‘Bob’ moved to New York City in 1954. Bob entered city politics and Frances played significant roles in his campaigns for the N.Y. City Council, where he served two terms. He is best remembered for sponsoring and seeing the signing into law by then-Mayor John V. Lindsey of a local anti-pollution law that outlawed the burning of soft coal, outlawed apartment house incinerators, and gradually reduced the permissible intent of sulphur in fuel oil.) His campaigns for mayor and for president of the City Council in 1969 while were unsuccessful had Frances
all over Manhattan and the five boroughs getting deeply connected with the people and issues of the most important city in the world.

After the birth of her two sons, Allen (now an airline pilot) and Roger (a long time hedge fund manager), Frances joined the New York City Partnership, a predecessor of the Partnership for New York, which awarded her a medal of achievement for her work in connecting business leaders with the work of City agencies, particularly the public school system. Later she brought the program, now known as Open Doors, to the Board of Education. The Program focused on exposing young students to the world of work and included talks by representatives of various fields of work. It also included visits to work sites and offices. Part of her program introduced young people to the possibilities of employment in the Culinary Arts. She became an early member of Les Dames d'Escoffier, now an international organization of prominent women connected with the food world.

Frances was a believer in the power of education and continued to support East Harlem School at Exodus House in New York City, a year-round middle school that teaches children from low-income families develop academic excellence, moral integrity, courtesy, and an unshakeable commitment to their future and the fate of their community.

Since moving to San Francisco with Bob in 1996 to be near their family, Frances had dedicated herself to several charitable activities, including AIM High, an organization that conducts summer programs for middle school students in school sites around the Bay Area. She also built a family website (thevanraaltefamily.com) to honor her two deceased sisters, ancestors and share family stories, photos and memorabilia.

Frances is survived by Bob, her husband of 60+, Allen, his children Andrew, Alexandra and Elena (and their mother, Berta); son Roger, and his children Jesse, Gabriel and Sarah (and their mother, Virginia), and many nieces and nephews.

Donations in Frances' memory may be made to East Harlem School, 309 East 103rd Street, New York, NY 10029.
A service for family and friends to celebrate Frances’ life will be held at a later date.