

## **Remembrances of Julia** **By Jerry Burke, Father**

Like her mother, Julia was a woman of substance. No one who knew her would describe her as a go-along person. She was a person who always charted her own course, walked her own mile. When she was about ten someone who met her for the first time was amazed at her sense of independence and willingness to express her opinions and insights in adult conversation. He later asked me what kind of kid she was.

I told him that Julia was the kind of kid that you could strap a parachute on and push out of an airplane over the middle of China somewhere. She would figure out how to open the chute on the way down and land safely. You could come back in a year and she would speak Chinese fluently, and everyone in the village would be her friend.

Julia has always filled her life with activities. She played soccer, she was on the swim team, in Girl Scouts, played the flute through Burton Elementary and Stanley School band and continued private lessons. She was a competitive figure skater for 5 years and she has been an altar server here at St. Monica for the last 6 years. Now she is a junior at the College Preparatory School where she did debate, crew, photography for the yearbook and made many friends.

One morning over breakfast she said, "Dad, I love my life and I really wouldn't change anything other than I wish each day had more hours. I just can't get everything done."

Toward that end, a year ago, she came home and announced that she wanted to be a coxswain for the Oakland Strokes Crew Team. This was coming from a young woman who was already sleeping only 5 or 6 hours a night. Despite our warnings and expressions of concern, she would not be deterred. Her mother and I consoled ourselves with the fact that she would learn a valuable lesson about time management and that this would not endure. How wrong we were. She did fit it in and it became an important part of her life. She so admired the dedication, commitment, and hard work that the young men put in to be the best at what they did. She loved being a part of it.

However she did joke that being a coxswain was the best job she could ever have. Where else could she have eight buffed out guys with no shirts on sitting in front of her begging her to tell them what to do.

If friends and crew were important parts of her life, debate was her passion. She spent eight weeks of each of the last two summers in college library basements gathering materials on renewable energy and US foreign policy toward Russia. Not what I might have chosen but she loved it.

She was a prominent national debater who was recently invited to the prestigious Fellows program next summer at the University of Kentucky as one of four debaters in the country to receive a 1st round invitation. She loved endless discussions with her fellow debaters about topics like nuclear proliferation and she regaled her mother and I with all the pro and con arguments on such topics.

Her mentor and debate coach Ryan Mills instilled in her a love of the philosophers and she read many of the works of Aristotle, Nietzsche and Heidegger. She recounted with excitement driving home from debate tournaments discussing with Ryan post-modern constructionist theory on renewable energy.

I have a humorous anecdote that I want to share with you. Ryan asked Julia to go over to another debater's house, Elliot Tarloff, to pick up some materials he left on the porch for their debate meeting. Now Elliot's mother is Laura Tyson who was Chairman of the Council of the Economic Advisors during Clinton's first term and now heads the business school at UC Berkeley. When Julia got to the front porch she saw a gentleman standing there ringing the doorbell. She approached him and explained that she was a debater with Elliot and was looking for some materials. He said he was having dinner with Laura. Julia asked if he knew her from Washington DC or UC Berkeley. He said he knew her from Washington. She said they must have their hands full back there, with all of the current problems with the Russian Ruble devaluation and the Asian crisis. After some discussion about economic problems, she began to give him her view of Alan Greenspan's policies on the subject. Part way through her explanation, the gentleman interrupted her to introduce himself as Alan Greenspan. She then got very embarrassed at not recognizing him and explained that she did all her research on LEXUS and never watched TV so she had no idea what he looked like, but wished him "good luck on the interest rates!"

One cause that Julia felt very strongly about was organ donation. She put the sticker for organ donation on the back of her driver's license before she ever put it in her wallet. She could not understand why everyone didn't do it. She said, "Dad, it's a no brainer! If one person doesn't need something and it could help someone else's little girl to live, that's an easy decision!" In the hospital, the doctors worked very hard to enable that transplant to occur. It was as if she were willing herself to stay alive long enough for her to provide a gift of life and sight to other people. Once again, Julia got her way.

For us, Julia was a phenomenal person-loving, intelligent, kind, independent and very funny. She brought us great joy and while I am sad that we had only 16 years, her mother and I will be eternally grateful for each moment. I am a better person today because of her. It was said that Alexander the Great was given a choice of a short brilliant life or long average life and that he chose the former. I think Julia would have done the same.

Each of you is a totally unique piece in the mosaic of her life and ours. We have enormously enjoyed watching her many friendships develop. She is so very lucky to have had each of you in her life. Sometimes it seemed that our main job as parents was to get out of the way.

As powerful as she was in life, we are completely overwhelmed by her power to elicit such an enormous response to her death. We are already experiencing Julia's spirit continuing among us.

And to Julia, thanks for everything, Sweetheart!!!