

**Eulogy by James Gregg
Rower, The Oakland Strokes
Oakland, California**

For those of you that don't know me, my name is James Gregg. I had the honor and privilege of knowing Julia both as a close friend and a teammate on my high-school rowing team. Over the past year, my teammates and I have grown especially attached to Julia, and shared some very special times with her. It means a lot to my team and me to be able to share with you today three or four of the experiences that Julia has given to us during the past year.

So I invite everyone here to enjoy some stories about the girl who lived life to its fullest, who appreciated new experiences, committed herself to excellence, and positively affected everyone she encountered.

The first time I met Julia was about a year ago. I saw a little blond haired girl come into the Oakland Strokes boathouse with my friend, Chuck Jones. At the time our team was looking for a new coxswain, apparently Julia was to be it. For those of you who don't know much about rowing, a coxswain's job is to steer the boat and to keep the rowers inspired and focused throughout practicing and racing. Being a coxswain is not easy.

Julia's first day out was something incredible that no one who was there will ever forget. On the first day, when most coxswains are struggling to keep the boat all straight, she started yelling commands at us. She told us to start doing power 10's and power 20's, and she ordered us to pull harder. She barely knew what the terms meant, but she knew they made the boat go faster, and she kept them up. After practice I heard Al, our coach, say that that was the first time that he had ever seen or heard anyone call power pieces on their first day. Julia was so gifted in everything that she did and this was just one example of how talented she was.

What is special about Julia is that she attacked not only crew, but life. She went through her days with us with an intensity that inspired us not only in the boat, but in our lives as well. Julia was one of the few people that I knew who understood how to live everyday to its fullest. She knew how to make her life extraordinary which I am very envious of. She never took a day for granted, and her enthusiasm showed up in everything she did. Julia not only helped me, but she helped everyone who knew her. She has made so many people better by simply knowing her.

The last practice I had with Julia gave me another special memory. Julia and I decided to literally switch places for the last few minutes of practice. I had to stand up and climb over her into the coxswain's seat, and she crawled under my legs into my vacant seat. I had to be the coxswain and steer the boat into the dock and she had to be the rower, and row into the dock. I can honestly say that I was horrible at coxing, and she wasn't that great at rowing either. But she was so excited to try. When we switched places I saw that glowing smile of hers. It was the smile that could brighten the darkest of days. It was the smile that lit up her beautiful face. It was the smile that none of us will ever forget. Julia always appreciated new experiences, and I loved that about her.

Coxing offers an incredible challenge. In order to be a good coxswain one must have dedication and commitment. Julia had both of these. We will all remember Julia as the one who tried just a

little bit harder, not because she had to, but because she wanted to. During the course of her career as a coxswain, she worked more and more everyday. There was one incident that truly defined Julia Burke's dedication to her team.

It was a dark afternoon at the Oakland Estuary, and she was coxing a boat with me and seven other guys in it. We were rowing along when we heard Al ask Julia if she saw the barge up ahead. We assumed Julia had acknowledged, and we kept rowing. However, about ten strokes later we were startled to hear sirens, and yelling and mass confusion. We quickly stopped rowing and looked behind us just in time to see the barge about ten feet away, backing up with all of its engines on full throttle reverse in its effort of avoid us. We successfully avoided the barge, but Julia was just a little shook. She apologized profusely, and we told her that it was all right, not a huge deal. But she still felt bad, so she went out that night and she actually bought two books on how to be a better coxswain. I don't know what was in those books, but Julia continued to cox us to an undefeated season last year. Her persistence to excel at everything she encountered continued to amaze us throughout the season, and her ability to be a great coxswain made our whole team better rowers. Julia was a truly selfless person.

Julia served a special purpose. This has been very clear since the first time I met her, and it has been especially clear this past week. Julia brought people together. She could put a smile into a sad day and inspired us all to be our best.

All those who have loved Julia so much all wonder why she was taken from us. I cannot offer an answer, and no one can say why it happened. But I know that God is waiting for her in heaven, and she has forgotten all the troubles that she went through in her final days. For NOW she has been embraced by God, and she is in His arms. NOW she remembers not the pain, but the love, and the prayers that we have sent with her onto heaven. Physically Julia is gone now. But her spirit, and her memory will never leave us. Julia Burke will never be forgotten, instead she will live on through all those that she has touched. With all of our love, rest in peace, Julia.