

# Madison Foursquare

16

## Julie Gomoll

In our living room we have a copy of a photo, taken on a cellphone, that Jeanne had printed on glass. It is a picture of Jeanne's sister, Julie, as an adult, swinging high on a wooden swing. The swing is part of tree house-like structure and the swing takes the rider out over a steep drop-off. The jungle is lush behind and below her, with clouds obscuring the mountains in the background. This picture was taken when Julie was traveling in Ecuador after graduating from culinary school in Austin. I feel the picture captures something both familiar and essential about the Julie I knew: *Leap and a net will appear* (which was her email sign-off line).



On Tuesday, July 25, Jeanne and I were out shopping for a joint retirement open house we had planned for the upcoming Sunday afternoon, when we got a call from Jeanne's brother Dan. Through tears he told us Julie's friends Tina and Tree had found her in her apartment. "She's gone," he said.

It came as a shock. It probably shouldn't have, it's hard to come away from an experience like this and not think we somehow should have seen it coming. But we didn't. We knew things were hard for Julie on several fronts, but we thought she was stable on her new treatment program and that she was able to support herself on freelance income as she had done for several years. She did not give us reason to think otherwise. Still, suicide often leaves the survivors with a profound sense of guilt whether it's fair or not.

Looking back, I was surprised to realize that I have known Julie Gomoll almost exactly as long I have known Jeanne. I met them both when they came down together with my cousin Spike to an ICON in Coralville, Iowa in 1984. It was only about a year later that Julie decided she'd had enough of Wisconsin winters and set off on a new life in the warmer climate of Austin, TX.

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Julie Ann Gomoll, of Austin, TX, was born August 5, 1962, in Milwaukee, WI to Inez and August Gomoll, died on Tuesday, July 25 in her home. She fought a life-long battle against depression but finally succumbed.

Julie lived her life as a true entrepreneur, on the edge and willing to take risks that few people would consider. She founded successful companies such as "Go Media" which launched her reputation as an on-line marketing visionary. Julie served as Austin's Mayor Kirk Watson's Technical Advisor, 1999-2000. She was recognized by President Bill Clinton for developing the Texas Technology Model of Excellence Access in 2003, and she won the City of Austin's Distinguished Service Award in 1998 for Community Building.

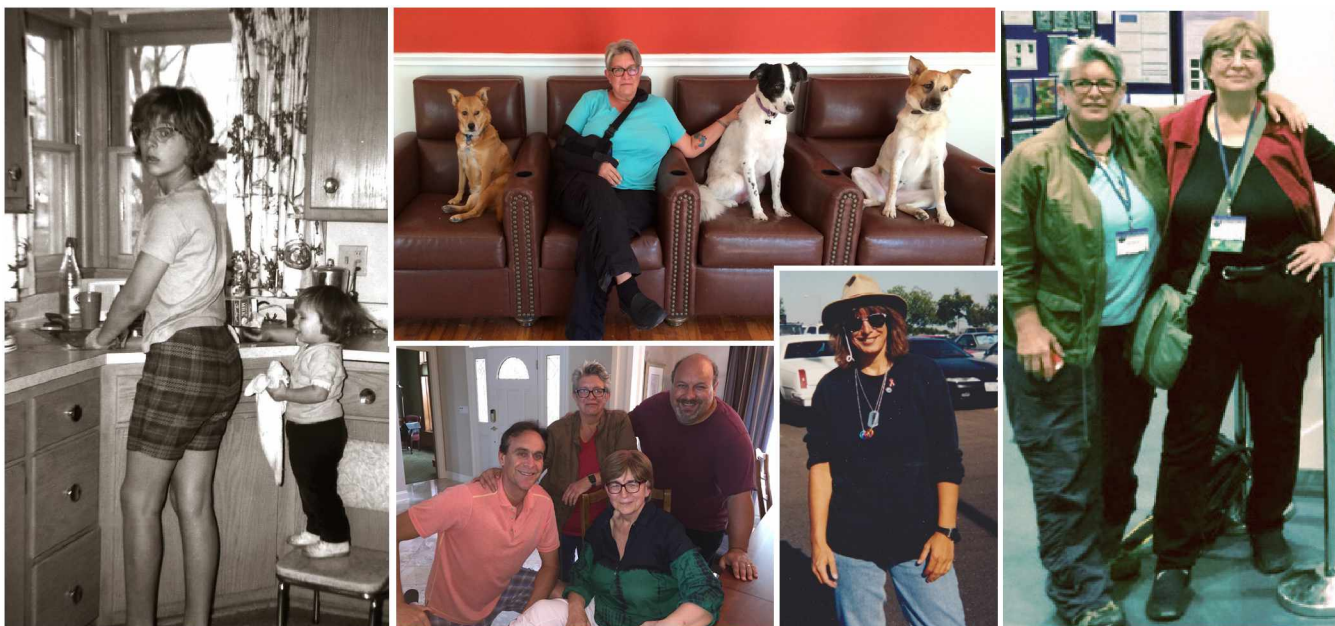
Beyond Julie's intellect and passion for innovation she is beloved for her willingness to help and share her wisdom with anyone willing to ask. Her very direct personality combined with true compassion for helping others, empowered many people to successfully redirect their personal and professional journeys.

Julie was a world traveler, a voracious reader, a lover of music, an adventurous cook, an outspoken advocate for LGBT rights, and above all a love for friends, family and her most precious dogs.

She is survived by her siblings, Jeanne (Scott Custis), Steven (Linda), Dan (Kelly) Gomoll, and Rick's partner Danny Field; by her nieces and nephews, Sara, Eric, Amanda, Rachel, and Jacob Gomoll; by hundreds of friends all over the world, and by her beloved dogs, Mr. Pants and Tip. Julie is predeceased by her brother Rick (10/23/1989), by her parents, August (5/5/2009) and Inez (9/7/2013), and by her dogs, Sadie and Kody.

Julie's body was cremated and no funeral service will take place. Friends and family are planning a November memorial event in Austin. Memorial donations can be made in Julie's name to Austin Pets Alive! <https://www.austinpetsalive.org/tribute-donation/>

"Leap and a net will appear" Julie Gomoll



It is likely she was struggling with depression as far back as that. Jeanne has been reading through the journals Julie left behind. Even when her health and finances were good and her work was going well, she was still struggling with depression. She wrote at one point that she thought of suicide every day. We thought we knew about her struggle, of course. She spoke openly about it with people she trusted. About ten years ago, Jeanne spent some time in Austin with Julie when she first attempted suicide. Her medication was not working. In January of this year, her brother Dan spent a week with Julie in Austin when she was again talking about suicide. She began a new eletro-chemical treatment approach. We did not know that she regarded this new approach as her last option. So far as we knew, it was going okay.

Julie was my friend. I respected and admired her. I felt comfortable around her. I always loved her company. I felt our tastes in music, books, politics, humor and many other things overlapped. In conversation she was so easy to talk to because she was so ready to slip past small talk and get right down to substance. I can remember great times with her going out to dinner or driving around, walking, or, my favorite, sitting at a bar or table with drinks in hand (wine, whiskey, or martinis most often) talking about food, books, movies, TV, affairs of state and family issues. I cannot say that I was as close to her as some others were. She moved to Austin years ago and being so far away we only really talked when we saw each other which was not nearly often enough, or long enough, to become truly close. But I absolutely loved her and I will miss her terribly.

Upon hearing the news that Tuesday, we dropped our shopping off at home and drove out to Jeanne's brother Steve's house in Oconomowoc, where Jeanne and I met

with her surviving siblings, Steve and Dan. Brother Rick had passed in 1989. Their parents are both gone, and now Julie. Julie had a small army of friends in Austin who were willing to help clearing out her apartment and dealing with her things but they needed to coordinate with Julie's family. Jeanne and I decided we were in the best position to drop everything and travel to Austin because we were mostly retired and Jeanne had experience of having just concluded being executor of her parent's estate. Julie's apartment was in the process of being cleaned so we could not leave immediately. We decided to tackle what we could from home right away and leave for Austin on the weekend.

We rented a car for the trip. I was concerned that our 18-year-old Lincoln might not be up for a hard drive to Austin. Time was somewhat limited as we had commitments back in Madison we wanted to meet the following weekend. I did not feel we could risk a breakdown on the road. We left on Saturday morning in our rented Nissan Sentra and drove as far as Springfield, MO. We arrived in Austin Sunday evening with arrangements to stay with Rachel Matthews, a friend of the family. Rachel's place was convenient as she was just down South 1st St. from Julie's apartment.

Jeanne got the apartment secured for one more month. What commenced upon our arrival was simply a whirlwind of activity and a mountain of details over the next three solid days. Julie's community of friends, who all knew her, but a surprising number of them did not know each other until now, came out to help and they were amazing. One of the toughest challenges was the dogs, Tip and Mr. Pants. They needed to have their shots updated and they needed new homes. Not an easy prospect because they were both rescue dogs and they both had significant issues, besides the fact that living



TEXAS SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 115

*In Memory of Julie Gomoll*

**Whereas**, The Senate of the State of Texas honors and commemorates the life of Julie Gomoll, who died July 22, 2017; and

**Whereas**, Julie Gomoll was an exemplary citizen who was noted for her generous spirit and her exceptional achievements; and

**Whereas**, Respected and admired for her entrepreneurial spirit, she enjoyed a successful career in marketing and Internet development; in 1987, she founded Go Media, which was the first company in Austin to produce print-ready output from a Mac computer and which created the first website for Whole Foods Market; later, as Excite, the company pioneered the first stand-alone, web-based instant messaging program; and

**Whereas**, She cofounded Austin Free-Net in 1995; this nonprofit organization wired local libraries with digital network connections, created learning programs for underserved areas, and became an international model for community computing; she later became an expert at providing strategies and consulting services to such companies as Berkeley Bionics, Dole, and Continuum Analytics; and

**Whereas**, She expanded her horizons in 2013 when she earned her chef's toque from the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts and completed an externship in Ecuador; and

**Whereas**, A woman of courage, intelligence, and compassion, she gave unselfishly to others, and her warmth and adventurous spirit will not be forgotten by her family and many friends; and

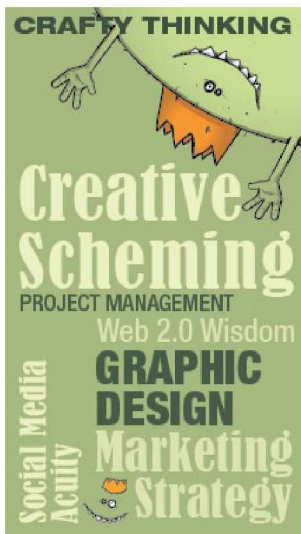
**Whereas**, She was beloved by many, and she leaves behind memories that will be treasured forever by all who were privileged to share in her life; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 85th Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby extend sincere condolences to the bereaved family of Julie Gomoll; and, be it further RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared for her family as an expression of deepest sympathy from the Texas Senate and that when the Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Julie Gomoll.

Dan Patrick (signed)  
President of the Senate

Patsy Spaw (signed)  
Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted  
by the Senate on August 10, 2017, by a rising vote.

Kirk Watson (signed)  
Member, Texas Senate



in the apartment (and being Julie's only companions when she passed) had left them traumatized. As strangers poured into the apartment and started moving things around, Mr. Pants became profoundly upset. He took a particular dislike to me, and bit Jeanne at one point (she was saved from injury by heavy socks). Tip was much more receptive to humans, but would follow Mr. Pants' lead on long barking jags, and is known to be very hostile to other dogs. Fortunately several of Julie's friends were familiar to the dogs and helped us get them fed, walked, and eventually taken to the vet for shots. Tina, who was very seriously committed to finding homes for them, did eventually place them both and the news today is that they are doing well, but we had to employ various strategies to work around them quite a bit while we were there.

We gave away as much as we could to Julie's friends. Many of her books went to Austin's Inside Books project which provides books to jail/prison inmates. Willie Siros came over and plucked out a few volumes of particular value for Jeanne to take home and sell to cover expenses, and took with him a box of books to sell in his store for the Tiptree Award. The rest went to Austin Pets Alive for fundraising and used book stores. Julie had a large collection of amazing cookbooks and coffee table books that mostly found homes among friends along with her furniture. Clothing and household items went to a women's shelter. An art dealer is working with Jeanne to find buyers for Julie's impressive art collection. The hardest piece to place has been a beautiful African sculpture in her front yard. It is not very tall, but it's very heavy, several hundred pounds at least, that someone will need to come and get. We are trying to donate it to a sculpture garden, hopefully with Julie's name on a plaque as donor. And there were a thousand other things that gradually acquired new homes or where donated to good causes.

Julie had planned her suicide. She was committed to it. When she was found, her computer was up and unlocked. She left many of her letters, diaries and journals out in the open, including her last one. She left water for the dogs and the door open to the back yard for them, and she knew when to expect that someone would be coming by the apartment to find her. The three full days we were in Austin was a very busy time, but it was also a time for her wide community of friends to come by and sit and talk (and laugh and cry) and to try to process this tragic event with us. They never saw it coming either. I wondered at what a truly painful and hopeless place Julie must have been in by the end to bear to leave such a wonderful community.

After we left Austin, the work continued. The apartment was cleared out and cleaned up by her fantastic friends. Jeanne bravely went 9 rounds with Wells Fargo Bank and finally won access to Julie's very small bank account (by far the most difficult and hidebound institution Jeanne had to deal with.) We will be returning to Austin for a Celebration of Julie's Life (aka: party in her honor) on November 11. After that, I know that I will always look forward to returning to Austin. There is still so much of Julie there.

—Scott Custis

