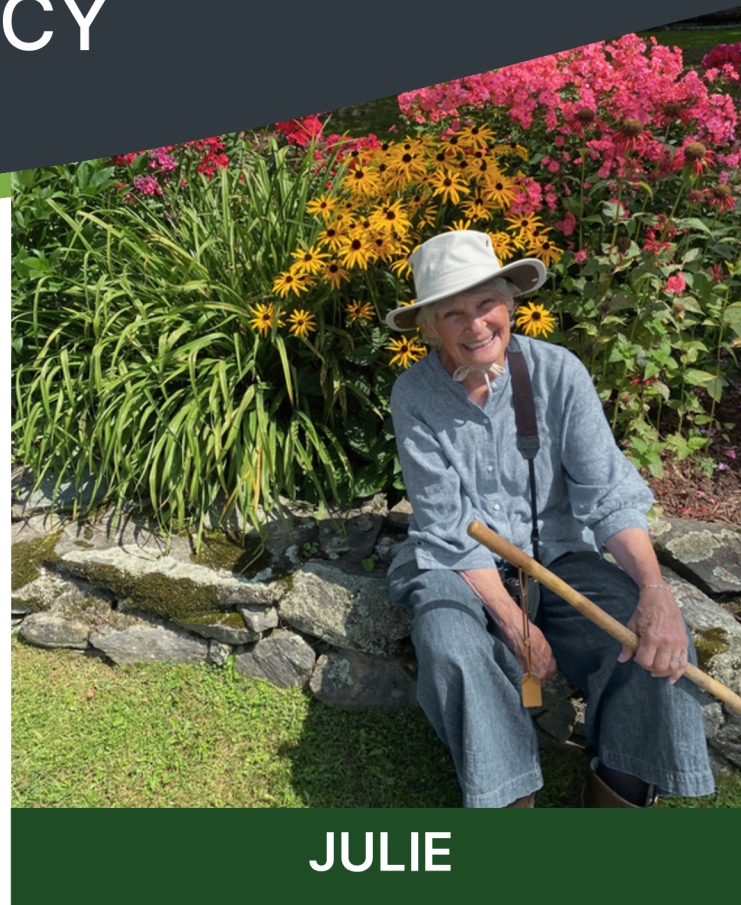


LOVE AND LEGACY

"You've got to have the long range view, but you could not do anything more for the world than investing in forestry."

Julie, a nonagenarian and Detroit native, began her love of the outdoors as a young girl on her family's property in Wallingford, Vermont, where her mother was born and raised. "Every summer mother would say 'we're going home' the moment school was over. Vermont was always her home and she instilled love of Vermont in all of us," recalls Julie. She has nurtured this love for nine decades, more than seven of them alongside her husband Peter. She and Peter met at Middlebury College and were married in 1954 when they graduated. While this is Julie's story, Peter figures prominently. They are the perfect pair, among one tenth of one percent who have been married more than seventy years.

Julie and Peter are unique in many ways. They are enrolled in the Vermont Tree Farm program and have been honored as Vermont Tree Farmers of the Year. Their East/West woodland ownership is a long story, but they have clearly managed their bi-coastal



JULIE

lifestyle with great care.

Peter was from Illinois but his family also had connections to the land. His father was from New England and worked for a business selling poles that were harvested on land he bought in the South. Peter helped in the timber management, and he and his sisters would ultimately inherit these land holdings. Although they lived out of state, in 1980, the family purchased 187 acres in Granville, Vermont. Over the years, they added additional parcels and today own and manage 562 acres of woodlands and a home where they live part-time. Their California ownership came later when the Parker family's southern woodlands were sold and the proceeds invested in west coast woodlands.

Julie is very candid in her assessment of their woodland journey. "I did not choose a life relating to forests. I chose a life relating to people, majoring in French, exploring other countries and cultures. I love birds. I love trees. I love Vermont and its rural nature. I love our house, but I'm a partner in managing our land. I am very dependent on Peter's knowledge." And he includes Julie in everything, valuing her opinion. She has learned a lot about forest management, but quickly adds, "I've learned an awful lot about myself as well."

Julie is also very candid about how difficult it was for her to put down roots as a part-time resident in Vermont. She had bouts of serious depression and a very serious episode of post-partem psychosis after the birth of their third child years earlier. The disruption to her life caused by the part-time transition to Vermont created a real setback for Julie when it came to her mental health. "I did not know how I could bond here or who I could bond with and Peter said, 'bond with me.'" She was willing to look inside herself, face her own shortcomings and dysfunction and that led to a dramatic breakthrough. "It really added up to a transformation, a kind of awakening," she says. Julie does not shy away with her struggles with depression and, in fact, has recently written an autobiography, *A Journey Beyond Despair*, that chronicles her adult life.

Despite the challenges, Julie has insight. She needed to meet townspeople. In California, she had a full life focused on people, teaching yoga in their home and starting a TV show. She felt uprooted in Vermont. She found a solution at the church. "There was no piano player and even though I wasn't great, I was better than nobody. The congregation was thrilled and so I

began to meet the locals, began to feel as though I did belong," she says. Peter, on the other hand, was perfectly at home here in the woods. Julie's eventual connection came from Peter's encouragement, asking her to start with simple walks in the woods, carrying pruning shears and shovels. "These fields have lots of rocks, he said, and I've got a crowbar if you can just kind of help me. And I'm thinking 'me, rocks, crowbar, this is not adding up.' Peter was very patient." Ultimately, it was an inner journey for Julie. "It took time, but I wanted to be the partner for Peter just like he had been for me, suffering through the yoga years. Then we really both began to love this place."

Julie describes life ever since as beautiful. "I've learned what I call JOBA: the joy of being alive." That joy



Julie and her husband Peter at their Vermont property.

for Julie is made up of an amalgam of people and nature. She loves interacting with people, especially her daughters and grandchildren when they come to visit, and she loves being in the woods in Vermont and California. She has her special places in the woods. "We've got two beautiful cherry trees and two beautiful soft maples and a lovely yellow birch that are kind of legacy trees and we've got a lovely little meadow where I walk every day. That keeps my blood pressure down." Julie is also very excited about some small oaks that she and Peter have been watching since they were quite young. "We always say, 'now let's go see our oaks, see how they're coming.'"

Some special places in the woods are more connected to experiences than the trees themselves. Julie had a friend from Nantucket who would visit and they would sit together under a particular tree. Her friend has since died and for a while Julie had a terrible time with her emotions. But her instinct was to go and sit there, to be with her friend and now, she says, "There's a very deep part of me invested in this beautiful spot where I can be alone with myself, or alone with the earth."

When asked if the woods are an inspiration for her writing, Julie ponders that question for a bit and responds, "I can't say yes, but maybe I'm missing

something. It has a quiet peaceful effect on me that gives me a chance to reflect. I can say it was right here that taught me some of the deepest lessons about myself. So, I'm really glad I overcame all my resistance to being here."

And, once Julie overcame this resistance, she was all hands on board with Peter in learning about forests and forestry. They signed up with Vermont Woodlands, Coverts Vermont, the Vermont Tree Farm, and the California Forestry Association. They learned so much about forests and how essential they are to humanity. They learned how to manage their forests and harvest sustainably. Julie explains, "We're always growing more than we cut. We're going to create old growth redwoods in California by careful management. We also learned that Vermont is not a place where it's easy to earn a living from the woods unless you make maple syrup, raise goats, or live a simple life. That was not the kind of lifestyle that we needed but we also wanted to maximize what the land could give us to keep the children interested, to keep it in the family."

Keeping their woodlands in the family is very important to both Julie and Peter. Peter has become an expert on family estate planning, navigating family ownership with his sisters in his generation as well as with his children in the next generation. "It takes an artist to do that. He's a good listener," says Julie. "It's very hard to try to persuade a bunch of young people to not see just money. A lot of it involves getting them involved, maybe somehow getting a little bit of a check to them, and helping them to think in the long-term." Julie and Peter have involved their daughters and grandchildren in both the Vermont and California properties. In Vermont,

they have hired their grandchildren to help with pruning and other tasks over the summer. "I would say our grandchildren are very interested. They love to come." All three daughters will come to own the Vermont property, but it has been decided, and all agree, that Nan, their middle daughter, will be the manager.

Although Peter is the lead in their partnership when it comes to forest management and operations, Julie has her own area of expertise. She is an avid birder. "The birders come every spring. We've got 16 years of records of the birders coming, usually early in June when we first arrive, and then coming back two weeks later to pick up other birds that might return a little later. And that's been a lot of fun for me to have this group." She also gets a lot of joy from observing and appreciating the changes in the forest over time. One time after visiting Shelburne Farms, Julie worried that their woods and trees were "messy." "I never saw such gorgeous woods as those at Shelburne Farms. Oh, maple and oak, not one of them double tops or anything." She was very relieved to learn that those trees had been planted and tended. She talks about the fun of knowing where the next harvest is going to be, and of walking the boundaries with Peter. "We've done a lot of bushwhacking and blazing of our trails," says Julie, although she admits to being more comfortable on the trails.

Julie also likes to think about how they can use their land to engage and educate other people, and Peter encourages her in that. In both California and Vermont, she finds that often people don't understand the values of a managed forest. The first question they often get is something like, "You don't cut trees,

do you?" That's when the lesson begins. "We had to sit down and talk to our neighbor, to explain about the pine harvest, the health of the trees, and the need to harvest before they all fell down on their own." Now, that neighbor has joined Vermont Coverts and Vermont Woodlands and has had a little harvest. "That was a great step forward," Julie notes. The neighbors have all heard about conserving their property, too. Some have done that while others are still resistant.

The property is conserved under a conservation easement. A big part of the motivation to build their ownership was seeing properties divided up into 10-acre "spaghetti" lots. "Those owners weren't interested in forestry, they were interested in investment." So when the opportunity arose, they bought additional properties.

"The forest is such a wonderful carbon sequester and we feel that we're doing something wonderful by having 500 acres of managed forest," says Julie. But it's not all about climate and carbon. Julie is particularly passionate about birds and bird habitat, and is very connected to certain trees. There are trees she hopes will never be cut and wants to put up signs that say "Legacy Tree" so they will stay forever.

Julie would encourage other women to

to buy forestland “like crazy” if they’re considering it. “You’ve got to have the long-range view, but you could not do anything more for the world than investing in forestry.” Julie spoke about this being a ‘women’s era’ where people have grown open to women excelling in all kinds of areas and doing things once not deemed acceptable, like owning woodlands on their own. In the same vein, she talked about not experiencing discrimination as a woman involved in owning forestland. “I felt there was a blindness, I haven’t felt sexism.” And she is very proud of her daughter Nan. “She’s a woman. She got into [forestry], she wanted to know more, she wanted to understand more, she wanted to be involved mainly in the California property, because we lived out there. And we would go up, not regularly but periodically, and meet with our forester.”

When asked about a favorite tool, Julie first mentions an electric saw that she was just tickled with. However, she eventually realized that it didn’t work very well, and Peter did not encourage her to replace it. “He’s very safety conscious, and I might be a little impulsive,” she notes. Today her favorite tool is her pruning shears, but she also has a favorite shovel and always has her walking stick and

binoculars when she goes into the woods.

Ultimately, beyond management goals, beyond the joy of birding, Julie has found that being a woman woodland owner has been about the power of being in a forest setting. “The forest is a setting. I suppose buying a business might be a setting. There are all kinds of settings, but a forest is kind of a classic setting because there is this beautiful expanse of nature. You’re going to face nature and it’s going to bring out your own nature.” Julie continues, with an eloquence born of struggle, “There were a lot of things about me that I did not know. A big inner journey into inner discovery that this forest witnessed. If you call it a play, this forest was the setting for us figuring out how to make it together and with our very, very different approaches and the give and take.”

Julie’s deeply moving story, *Journey Beyond Despair: A Memoir of Love, Psychosis and the Power of Insight*, on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, reveals in humbling and candid detail her 30 years of searching inward for the dysfunction that led to permanent healing.

