



Julia Karin Lawson

January 21, 1945 - January 10, 2024

Julia Karin Lawson, 78, of Bloomington, died of pancreatic cancer on Wednesday, January 10. She was born on January 21, 1945 in Englewood, New Jersey to Henry and Julie Hoffmann.

Julia grew up in River Vale, New Jersey and graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1967. She earned her M.A. in 1968 and her Ph.D. in 1980 in German from Indiana University. As a graduate student at IU, she met John Lawson and they fell in love. They married on March 21, 1969.

Julia dedicated her life and career to education. She taught German as a visiting professor at Indiana University at Bloomington from 1980 to 1984. In 1985, the family moved to Alexandria, Virginia where she continued her teaching career at Northern Virginia Community College, Georgetown University's continuing education program, and as a program director at Languages Incorporated, a private school in Falls Church, Virginia. After moving back to Bloomington in 2002, she resumed teaching at IU in 2004 as an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Germanic Studies. Additionally, she worked as a translator and served as a diction coach for Jacob School of Music's Opera Theater from 2008 through this past fall.

In addition to teaching, Julia was always actively involved in her community. While living in Virginia, she volunteered with the Northern Virginia Swimming League. In Bloomington, her activities are almost too numerous to count but included volunteering with the Lotus Education and Arts Foundation, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, and serving on the board of the

Bloomington Early Music Festival.

Julia had numerous interests and hobbies. She enjoyed horseback riding, swimming, and being in nature. For most of her time in Virginia, she played coed and women's softball. She loved music, theater, and dancing. In the 1980s, she participated in several productions with Bloomington Town Theater. She played piano and guitar and was recently learning the accordion. Most of all she loved to sing with family, friends, and in the UUCB Choir. She was an amazing knitter who never met someone who didn't need a gorgeous handmade sweater, delighted in her Duolingo streak, tended a beautiful garden, solved cryptic crosswords, and devoured crime procedurals. She cherished her family and friends, maintaining connections with people from every stage of her life and traveling as often as possible to visit relatives and loved ones in Germany and Switzerland. She was always ready to lend a helping hand and open her door to neighbors, family, and friends. She could often be found enjoying porch time with loved ones; if anyone she knew walked by, she always invited them to join her.

Julia is survived by her beloved family: son, Robert, daughter-in-law, Suzanne Dell'Orto, and grandchild Nico; son David and daughter-in-law, Bridget Gavaghan; her sister Toni Letaw; and brother Carl Hoffmann. She is preceded in death by her husband and her parents.

A celebration of Julia's life will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington at 1:00pm on Saturday, June 29, 2024. In lieu of flowers donations may be made in her name to the Bloomington Early Music Festival (<https://blemf.org/>).

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory, 4155 South Old State Road 37 in Bloomington have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at allencares.com

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN **29**. 1:00 PM (ET)

Unitarian Universalist Church
2120 N. Fee Ln
Bloomington,, IN 47408

Tribute Wall

HD

“ When i started college at IU in 2013, Frau Lawson was my first-ever German professor. I saw the syllabus online before the academic year started, and reached out to her worried that the course would be too difficult and advanced for me. She gave me reassurance and encouraged me to challenge myself in her class. She proved to be an extraordinary instructor and my German language skills and self-confidence improved very much under her tutelage. I only just learned of her passing and am deeply saddened by the news. My heart goes out to Frau Lawson's friends and family as they continue to grieve such a painful loss.

Heidi Davenport - February 02, 2025 at 03:45 PM

RS

“ Julie and John were the most wonderful neighbors - I miss them both very much. My condolences to the family.

Robert Stright - June 30, 2024 at 08:58 AM

DM

“ Played softball with Karen many years ago.

Donna Lynn Malo - February 20, 2024 at 01:45 PM

CO

“ With deepest sympathy to Julie’s family for their loss. Julie, John & I were Cub & Boy Scout parents together, back when our boys were young & renewed our friendship, when they moved back to Bloomington from Alexandria. Whether it was deciphering cryptic handwriting in Old German or coaxing a discouraged patient through recovery from knee surgery, Julie was always ready, willing & extremely able to help. There is nobody like Julie. Never will be. We will all miss her terribly. In sympathy, Cindy O.

Cindy Oswalt - February 19, 2024 at 10:42 AM

EC

“ I have known Julie since the early 70ies, when I started to work in the German Department. We became good friends and stayed in touch after both of us left Bloomington and then returned again about the same time.
She was a wonderful, smart, caring and helpful person. I will miss her, as will her many friends, the City and the University.
May she rest in peace.
My condolences to the family.

Edda Callahan - February 14, 2024 at 02:44 PM

JP

“ Ist seine Erbsen. John K: Pearson, Lawrence, Kansas

John K Pearson - January 30, 2024 at 12:40 PM

BH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Bieneke Haitjema - January 25, 2024 at 10:36 AM

BH

“ I first met Julie in 2006 when I joined the 'Germanic Studies Canasta Group'. In 2010 she and I not only became colleagues at the Germanic Studies Department, but also friends. We both loved cats, plants, opera, and of course, languages.

I remember Julie's fun approach to life and her love of music, both in the classical as well as the jazz field.

We would sometimes walk together from Ballantine Hall to Bear's Place on a late Thursday afternoon to listen to the jazz sessions there.

How wonderful and appropriate that Monika Herzig wrote a piece in honour of Julie's husband John, but so sad that Julia passed away right before the premier which was to take place on her birthday on the 21st.

I am sharing a picture of our last canasta get together at my house, about 10 months ago.

My deepest sympathy to Julie's children and grandchildren.
Bieneke Haitjema

Bieneke Haitjema - January 25, 2024 at 10:30 AM

GM

“*Julie will be so missed! Indeed, she and John made our town so much better - through their support of the jazz scene, of the Lotus festival, of the farmers markets - generously donating their time and expertise, sharing their passion. I loved running into Julie at different places in town and chatting. She was always in a good mood, always cheerful and fun. For 17 years we also played cards together and got a chance to catch up on life events and have some laughs. Both Julie and John gone too early, rest in in peace dear friends!*

Gergana May - January 22, 2024 at 03:59 PM

PM

“*Frau Lawson is was one of my favorite professors that I had in my time at Indiana. She was always so kind and supportive to her students. Vielen Dank, Julia*

Philip McCown - January 19, 2024 at 11:42 AM

BS

“*Julia was such a sweet, kind, and generous person. I first worked with Julia in an opera as she was my German diction coach. Then, we got to work in many other operas together. She was always so supportive, understanding, and we always ended our sessions laughing. Then years later we found ourselves enjoying a coffee in Aspen. It really breaks my heart that I won't see Julia again in this life, but I feel honored that my life has been touched by her, her sense of humor, infectious laugh, and amazing conversations. Rest in peace, suÙe Julia! You will be sorely missed.*

Bruno Sandes - January 19, 2024 at 01:55 AM

BR

“*Julie was a treasure to all of us in Germanic Studies at IU--a lovely and dynamic friend who brought care to everything she did. She was truly a part of us in the most important way--through her curiosity, wisdom, humor and enthusiasm as well through her dedication as teacher, mentor, citizen, diction coach, newsletter editor and supporter of others. We will miss her dearly! --Ben Robinson*

Benjamin Robinson - January 18, 2024 at 05:41 PM

NL

“*My deepest sympathy to Julie's family. She was the best officemate and colleague I could have wished for and an inspiration for how to live life.*

Nikole Langjahr

Nikole Langjahr - January 18, 2024 at 03:29 PM

MW

“*Julie was so wonderful. She coached the German for two operas I performed in at IU, and she was there every single day at rehearsal, sharing joy and helping us prepare. She always had fun one-liners to help us remember things, like, “umlauts are not decorations!” After a Hänsel und Gretel rehearsal, she came with a bunch of the ladies from the show to Mother Bear’s pizza. She told us about her life and Germany and it was such a wonderful experience. She even helped teach the Gretels how to knit. She was a kind soul, through and through, and she will be missed.*

Malinda Wagstaff - January 18, 2024 at 10:43 AM

KM

“ My condolences to Julie's family. She was a valued German diction coach in our operas at IU Opera Theater, and we will surely miss her passion, devotion, and sense of joy when working with our students in opera productions. May she rest in peace. Sincerely,
Kevin Murphy

Kevin Murphy - January 16, 2024 at 10:22 AM

JP

“ Julie and John were gifts to our community of Bloomington, IN. They made our town a better, kinder, sweeter, and more enjoyable place to live. I miss them dearly and am grateful for their friendship and dedication. They were angels on earth. Long live their memory.
-John Porter

John Porter - January 16, 2024 at 10:04 AM

KG

“ My heart goes out to you, Rob and David and families. I hear your mom's burst of laughter as she sits on the back porch with my parents and feel the loss of her spirit keenly. With love- Kate Gleeson

Kate Gleeson - January 16, 2024 at 07:54 AM

CZ

“ I first met Julie when I was visiting the faculty department at IU and we learned to know each other though politics and German. She was so smart and we hit it off and over the years became good friends and much more than that. Julie offered to help me write the book about the 1971 election which change the politics of Bloomington which took two years sitting at the computer going over the book word for word paragraph by paragraph, page by page which made the book I hoped it would be. We never argued only disagreed and her suggestions were totally good. We had a wonderful relationship which made us very close. when I was president of the board of works in Bloomington there was seldom a meeting where some organization or other that needed help closing a street or opening a park or helping some organization or fundraiser orb celebration and Julie most of the time represented those organizations. She was really valuable citizen of the community helping individuals and the city itself. She was a wonder and a wonderful woman and friend and she will be sorely missed.

Love always Charlotte

charlotte zietlow - January 15, 2024 at 09:25 PM

EC

I first met Julie and John when I started work in the German Department in 1972. We had many fun get togethers with other grad students, including weekly card parties at Rapps, Oktoberfest, etc. The Lawsons moved away for several years, as did I, but we stayed in touch and reconnected when we both returned. Julie was one of a kind -- sweet, kind, smart, funny and always helpful. I will miss her, as will her many friends, the city and the university. My condolences to the family.

Edda Callahan - February 09, 2024 at 10:48 AM

SG

Met John, Julie, Rob, and baby David in Pennsylvania... so many, many years ago... I lived acrossed the road in the rural countryside. Oh, so many years ago... so many miles and years since. Wonderful neighbors & friends. Sandra Gander - July 15, 2024 - Bradenton,FL

Sandra Gander - July 15, 2024 at 07:21 PM