

# Julia Butzine, 1914 to 2008

by **Jacoba Charles**

Julia Elizabeth Butzine, an avid gardener and devoted mother, passed away on October 1 at home in Point Reyes Station. She was 94.

“She was an incredibly sweet person,” said her granddaughter Erin Rodoni. “She was always smiling and happy, and loved company. She made a big deal about being very welcoming and inviting people into her house.”

“Whenever I took her out shopping people would gravitate to her, because she was so pretty. She had really white hair and she had this purple raincoat. She always liked to wear purple,” added her daughter, Karen Rodoni. “She was such a beautiful little lady.”

Julia was proud of being a homemaker, and tending to her family, guests and garden. When asked to write a short autobiography for a high school reunion some years back, she responded with modesty.

“If I were famous, or even infamous, there might be a reason for writing my autobiography. But, since neither is the case, it seems like a waste of time and energy, especially this time of year with the tomato plants, marigolds, and impatiens begging to be placed in their summer home. We have been an average family with two children. We have worked hard, done some traveling, sent our children to universities,” she wrote.

“While mom might not have felt her

life was that noteworthy, to my brother and me she has been the most important person in our universe,” Karen said.

Julia Butzine, neé Ward, was born on January 22, 1914 in the small rural town of Benson, West Virginia. She loved to play along the creek and at her grandfather’s grist mill, where local farmers would bring their grains to be ground into flour. Climbing to the third story of the mill and watching activity bustle below her was one of her fondest memories.

Despite being often sick as a child, Julia would walk to school in all seasons. Once she reached high school, the walk was too far so she moved into Clarksburg to live with an uncle and invalid aunt.

“I think that was a hard time in her life,” said Karen. “She was away from home and her family. Her aunt and uncle loved her, but she kind of had to work for her keep.”

It was the depression, and Julia had a part-time job while in school and also did work around the house. In school she switched to business classes so that she would be ready to get a job when she graduated.

At 20 years old, Julia proved to be adventuresome as well as practical, moving to Chicago at the invitation of a cousin. She got a job as a secretary, and after work would go to the golf course with some co-workers who called themselves the “five o’clock club.”

There she met Wellington “Bud” Butzine, an industrial engineer. “He started following her and her friends around on the golf course,” said Karen. “Eventually he asked if he could join them.”

The two married on July 13, 1940, and took a tour of the western United States

for their honeymoon. Soon they had two children, Kent and Karen. By the mid-1950s, the couple had designed and built their “dream home,” a modest one-story brick ranch house on a shady street in Glenview, a suburb of Chicago.

Julia kept an immaculate house and tended her rose garden and lily pond. Though she preferred the Reader’s Digest to novels, Judy instilled a love of reading in her children by reading to them regularly. Both parents were dedicated to their children’s success, perhaps because of their own meager upbringing.

“In high school, instead of having us do the dishes, she would say, ‘No, no, you go study,’” Karen said. “She kind of spoiled us. She was very proud of us having good grades and going to university.”

Once her kids were in high school, Julia began to work as a secretary again. She liked to walk to work, even when it was snowing, Karen said.

“She was so social, and she made friends with all the people she worked with,” Karen said. “Even after she retired she would have lunches with her co-workers.”

When Bud became ill with Alzheimer’s, Julia cared for him almost single-handedly until he passed away in 1991. At that point, she moved west to a small house on a cul-de-sac in Petaluma that was halfway between her son’s family in Napa and her daughter’s in West Marin.

“It was all young families there,” said Karen. “She became grandma to many of the neighborhood children.”

When she was 90, Julia moved to Point Reyes Station to live with Karen and Fred Rodoni. Always a birdwatcher, she enjoyed watching the vultures, ravens and



Photo courtesy of Karen Rodoni.

other wild birds that could be seen easily from the windows of her new home.

The year that she moved, she made it into the sheriff’s calls when a noise complaint was filed during her granddaughter’s wedding reception. Thanks to a very slightly spiked punch, Julia was dancing to a Beatles tune—while holding her children’s hands for balance—when the sheriffs arrived.

“It was really sweet to see my mom kicking her feet out,” said Karen. “It was such a happy day for everyone.”

*Julia is survived by her son, Ken Butzine, of Napa; her daughter and son-in-law, Karen and Fred Rodoni, of Point Reyes Station; her granddaughter Erin Rodoni and her husband Yatindra Pandya, of San Francisco; her grandson, Ryan Rodoni, of San Francisco; and her brother, Roscoe “Skip” Ward, of Mechanicsburg, PA. The family asks that any memorial contributions be made to Hospice of Petaluma, 416 Payran Street, Petaluma.*

## The flu and flu vaccines

by **Dr. Michael Witte**

In a recent “Classic Peanuts,” Lucy is frantically stomping out the ground in front of a prone Linus, who is coughing like crazy. She, and he, are leaving the world that much safer by stomping out Linus’ coughed up germs. A flu shot might be their next step, and probably a bit more effective!

We think of flu season beginning in the fall, after school is back in session. There is no doubt that the close exposure of kids to each other, and adults’ increased time in more crowded spaces indoors, does contribute to the spread of viruses. In fact, the fall is a time that “rhinoviruses,” that family of several dozen nasty little critters that cause the common cold, show up to torture us. But Influenza A, the infamous flu, actually blows through California and the West Coast of North America from January through March in most years. Likely it will do the same this year. The flu is a nasty, even sometimes fatal, respiratory viral disease. In large measure it can be prevented if enough people get flu shots. One of the principles of immunization is called “herd immunity.” This means that when a large enough percentage of people in a population are immunized against a disease, there is so little spread that even un-immunized people become immune to getting it. So if a vaccine is safe, the more people that actually get the vaccine, the more its spread to the entire population is prevented. This becomes especially important for some of our elders, babies and other people with chronic diseases. Their immune systems may be weak enough that they don’t respond to the vaccine appropriately (it doesn’t work

to protect them nearly as well) but they become indirectly protected by so many of the rest of us getting our shot. In this way, the number of people that they are exposed to with the flu is minimized.

### Some myths and facts about flu shots:

- *Flu shots cause the flu.* The flu shot is not a live virus. It cannot cause the flu. If a person gets sick within a couple weeks of the shot, they were exposed before they got the shot.
- *“I can’t get the flu shot because I’m sick.”* Not true. Only wait if you have a high fever (101 or more) or are otherwise seriously ill.
- *Asthma patients shouldn’t get the flu shot.* Not only untrue but dangerously wrong. The flu shot is particularly important and safe for people with lung problems.
- *There is not enough vaccine for everyone.* There is a ton of vaccine this year. Enough for every eligible person.
- *I waited too long. It’s too late.* Remember, the flu peaks in February. Even January isn’t too late.
- *I hate shots.* There is a nasal spray called Flu Mist for healthy people between two and 50 years old (because it is a live virus its use is restricted to this age group).

*There is a Flu Immunization Clinic, open to everyone, at the West Marin Wellness Day, October 15, from 3 to 6 p.m., at the Dance Palace, in Point Reyes Station.*