

Beyond Words: In Loving Memory of Professor Julie Thompson Klein (1944–2023)

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Words do not suffice. But words are all we have. There have been so many eloquent, loving tributes to Julie through tears and sorrow since we learned of her untimely death on January 15, 2023. Her loved ones, colleagues, former students and mentees, and friends, near and far, are comforted by the worldwide gathering of memories. Julie's death is still jarring—for so many reasons—and will continue to be so. Her loss to the world of interdisciplinary studies and the academic community-at-large is immeasurable, but her loss to her husband George of more than 50 years is difficult to even imagine.

Our friend and Wayne State University colleague, Caroline Maun, former faculty member in the former Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, in which Julie and I taught for decades, and current associate professor in and chair of the Department of English, in which Julie last taught for several years before her retirement in 2015, writes:

Julie earned her B.A., M.A., D.A., and Ph.D. in English between 1967 and 1972 at the University of Oregon. She then joined Wayne State as an Assistant Professor in 1970, where she earned tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in 1977–1978 and Full Professor in 1989. In academic year 2007–08, she joined the English Department after a long and successful career in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program and Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Wayne State. In addition to her role in the English Department, Julie also served as a Fellow in the Office of Teaching and Learning and the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Julie held visiting professorships in several countries, including Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. She was also the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, at Wayne State, nationally, and internationally, for her work in interdisciplinarity and digital humanities. She was appointed as an expert for a variety of notable institutions, including the National Science Foundation and the National Center of Scientific Research in France.

It is also important to note what another Association for Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) friend and colleague, Machiel Keestra, a professor in the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies and Central Diversity Officer at the University of Amsterdam, shares:

[Julie was on] the boards of different organizations across the globe— [including] the US-based Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, of which we both have been presidents, Transdisciplinary-Net—sponsored by the Swiss Academy of Sciences, the Australian initiative of Integration and Implementation Sciences, the Toolbox Dialogue Initiative, the ATLAS and CIRET networks, the International Network for the Science of Team Science, and we both were founding board members of the Global Inter- and Transdisciplinary Alliance.

Julie and I met in the mid-1970s at Wayne State University, and, with a number of other faculty across the disciplines, built the interdisciplinary studies program for adult learners from the ground up. It was a highly successful, nationally and internationally known program, eventually department (IS), for 34 years, graduating thousands of grateful students with a Bachelor's and/or a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. In September 2007, solely for political reasons, the administration and the Board eliminated our department. I was chair at the time and had to preside, with a heavy heart, over dissemination of our faculty to their PhD field departments. Julie went to the Department of English, and I went to the German area of the newly merged foreign languages department (Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

In this context, I cherish that Julie was always so supportive of my leadership of our program, then department, and also our college—positions I held for more than 20 of my 42 years at Wayne State.

As a faculty member in IS, Julie helped to create engaging courses in our Humanities Division, in which I also taught, and she was especially sought after by students who needed to complete a senior project or essay toward their bachelor's degree and, later, by students writing a Master's thesis for their Master's degree. Our Humanities courses were topic-, issue-, or problem-centered, and Julie's courses, in particular, were always enrolled to capacity. She had an extraordinary following through the years, especially in one of her very favorite courses, "Music and American Culture." She taught this course as a weekend conference over three weekends during the semester, one of the three modalities of our curriculum, in addition to weekly four-hour workshops and telecourses. Our curriculum and modalities were set up to address the needs of working adults, who were able to attend precisely because their in-class time during each week was limited to the four-hour workshops in which they were enrolled. They viewed the telecourse programs at their leisure each week and attended a conference course three weekends a semester as well. All of us on the faculty became dedicated to this flexible schedule for working adult students and committed to our students' progress as they made their way toward graduation.

Professor Maun offers insight into Julie's work in her department once she had transferred to English in 2007, as well as her own personal connection with Julie:

Julie's contributions to the English Department at Wayne State included course offerings informed by her expertise in interdisciplinary and digital studies. Among many courses she enjoyed teaching are the following: "Introduction to Fiction. Literature & Writing: Tell Me a (Techno)Story"; "Topics in New Media: Community and Identity in Digital Media"; "Senior and Honors Seminar: The Digital Turn in English Studies."

I will miss her dearly. I met her in 2004 when I joined the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, and she did much to encourage me through various academic milestones and our transfer to the English Department. She was unfalteringly kind, had rich perspective on the academic enterprise, and was a steadfast and great ally.

Over the years, Julie won both college and university awards for her excellence in teaching and became a model of the consummate teacher in both our Bachelor's and Master's programs. Above all, Julie was always "on the case" to help or advise colleagues and students alike with whatever they needed to be the best they could be. And we know that Julie was the very same generous, genuine mentor to colleagues across the globe with regard to their scholarship. She relished seeing students and colleagues succeed in their academic and scholarly goals—from the undergraduate level to the most prestigious journal. I see her smiling now as I say this, as it was probably what brought her the greatest joy.

I remember Julie through almost 50 years of friendship and work together, but I have a final beautiful memory of her zooming into the plenary session that focused on her 2021 book, *Beyond Interdisciplinarity*, responding so eloquently and enthusiastically to those on the panel at the 2022 AIS Conference at Sonoma State University. At that time, very few of us knew that she was so ill. And she wanted the attention not to be on her but on the panelists, the audience participants, and the intellectual give and take. That was quintessential Julie.

Julie had introduced me to the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies in 1984, I joined, and the rest is history. Our regular communication, our participation in annual AIS conferences, and our collaboration on projects continued through the decades, including a very significant one with our colleague and friend, Karen Moranski, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Sonoma State University: "Association for Interdisciplinary Studies Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion for Interdisciplinary Faculty," now on the AIS website as a permanent living document for colleagues worldwide.

It is hard for me to put into words my gratitude for my longtime friendship with Julie and appreciation of her generous mentorship of younger and more seasoned colleagues and students, at Wayne State and around the world. Her stellar contributions to interdisciplinary teaching, pioneering scholarship, and extraordinary service are on all our minds and in our hearts. Julie was passionate about all of her professional work to the very end. She was an

exemplary teacher, scholar, leader, and human being. And given our frequent exchanges about German words that she needed translated appropriately for the context of her scholarly work, I can say: Julie was a real *Mensch*. The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies and the English Department and other areas of WSU in which she was active were so fortunate to have her as a faculty member for decades, not to mention the myriad national and international organizations she helped create and nurture.

No words suffice for the ache and profound loss we feel locally and worldwide. Julie was and will forever be in a circle of love and admiration for all she was to her family, colleagues, friends, and students—and the global scholarly community.

And Julie: you never wanted to be the center of attention. But now, my beloved friend, you must be exactly that. And it is something that you would likely understand because those who loved and respected you while you lived—your kindness, your generosity of heart and mind, and your openness—will forever love, respect, and miss you.

Biographical Note

Roslyn Abt Schindler, PhD, is Associate Professor Emerita of Interdisciplinary Studies, German, and Holocaust Studies. Her career, both as a teacher and administrator, spanned 42 years at Wayne State University (Detroit, MI) and several years at other institutions. Roz has a longtime record of research and scholarship in interdisciplinary studies and adult learning as well as in Holocaust Studies. She has published book chapters on the memoirs of several new or neglected German Holocaust survivor-authors, co-edited the two-volume *Festschrift*, entitled *University Governance and Humanistic Scholarship: Studies in Honor of Diether Haenicke*, and self-published a memoir about Goldie Seidner Abt: *(Re)vision of a Life: My Mother's Holocaust Story*. Roz taught courses in the Humanities, German, and a memoir-based Holocaust course entitled "Bearing Witness: Understanding the Holocaust One Life at a Time." In retirement, she is actively involved in volunteer work for her synagogue, AIS, and the Democratic party. She can be contacted at rozschind@aol.com.