



Diet champion Julia Griggs Havey, holding her "fat pants," has come a long "weigh."



"After He Cheated on Me, I Lost 130 lbs."

Julia awakened her "thin" within, after getting not one—but three—wake-up calls...

BY HILLARY QUINN

It was 10 p.m. when Julia Griggs, of St. Louis, Missouri, jumped into her car after a fight with her husband, Kent. She drove around for a while, as she often did, wrestling with the unhappiness that seemed to be choking her 6-year-old marriage. Then she decided to make herself feel better with the one vice that never failed her—food.

Pulling up to the Amoco station, Julia gave her XXL sweatshirt the requisite tug over her 290-

pound body and walked to the counter for a Mounds bar.

A homeless man, leaning on the side of the building, began heckling Julia. "Girl, you got too much food in you...!" "I flipped him off and drove away," recalls Julia. "I ate my Mounds bar, but I cried while I was eating it." After the tears dried, realization set in. "The man didn't call me fat, he didn't say I was a bad wife or a loser...he just called it as he saw it. I had too much food in me." It was a defin-

ing moment for Julia, who had been struggling with her weight for years. A few days later, she found herself at the doctor's office with a strange lump at the base of her neck. "I thought I had cancer, but when the doctor walked in, he announced it was a 'fat deposit.' It was just the push I needed to get serious about losing weight."

"My Boss Would Weigh Me..."

Weight had been a central focus in Julia's life for decades—ever since her stint as a flight attendant for TWA. "After I got married, I started gaining 10 pounds here, 10 pounds there...always pushing the weight restrictions dictated by the airline... My boss would call me in and weigh me and it was totally humiliating." So when the news came that Julia was pregnant with her first child, Taylor, now 13, she was exhilarated. "I thought, 'There's nothing they can do about my weight now!'" But while the baby brought joy, Julia's slowly dis-



Julia and her second husband, Patrick.

LOVE AT FIRST BITE: SHE GOT SLIM, SHE GOT HIM

After losing 130 pounds, newly divorced Julia became a weight-loss champion to admiring co-workers. She started a fat-free lunch club; office mates would take turns bringing in lean food for everyone to enjoy. One day in 1995, a handsome young chiropractor, Patrick Havey ("one of our regulars," she says), came bearing low-fat manicotti. "We started talking... became really good friends ...and got married seven months later," she says.

the pounds accumulated, Julia exchanged the luxurious, size-8 suede and leather outfits she'd amassed during her airline travels for size-26 leggings and billowing tops—easy attire for the new job she landed as a physician recruiter. "I finally didn't have to lose weight to get back into a uniform, and I thrived in the new environment," recalls Julia. "I had the gift of gab. I was good at sales, and for the most part, I felt content." As con-

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JULIA: SUZCY GORVIAN

"...I lost 130 lbs."

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tent as one can be with a nightly half-gallon of ice cream and a stale marriage.

"My Husband Denied He'd Been Having an Affair"

One day, Julia came home early from work to find an anonymous letter in her mailbox, leaking the news that Kent had been having an affair for 2-1/2 years. "My son, Clark, was not even a year old. My heart just stopped. I couldn't fathom it," says Julia, who promptly paged her husband at his job site and confronted him with the accusation. "He denied it. Said it wasn't true. But...he's married to her now, so the answer's kind of obvious," she says with a wry smile. Julia's husband never confessed to the affair, and the couple spent six futile months trying to mend their marriage. During that time in 1993, Julia came head-to-head with the homeless heckler, the frightening doctor's visit, and the wake-up call that she needed to get her life—and her body—in order.

"I'm Like an Alcoholic With Ice Cream"

Julia began to focus on rebuilding her self-esteem and decided it would kick off with an official goodbye to ice cream. "It's my trigger food—I'm like an alcoholic with it." Three weeks without ice cream resulted in a seven-pound weight loss alone. Inspired by her progress, Julia got serious about losing the rest of the weight. "As I became happier, the weight started to come off because I was dealing with my problems instead of eating to avoid them." With every success, Julia offered herself a reward—a manicure, a pedicure, a new book. "I came to crave the great feelings that my rewards gave me more than the food."

Next came meal planning, a key tool in Julia's weight-loss plan. "When I was overweight, I would start wondering what I would have for lunch at 9 a.m." The new regimen, which featured the same breakfast every day ("a big bowl of Quaker Oats or bran flakes with fresh berries"), included bringing a grocery bag of ingredients to work so Julia could prepare her healthy lunch. The concoction—coined the "Sticky Sandwich" by coworkers—consisted of broccoli slaw, red, green, and yellow peppers, low-fat Swiss cheese, mustard, mayo, and dense whole-wheat bread. "I'd microwave it, and it was as fulfilling as eating a hamburger," says Julia. Dinner rotated between pasta with veggies, baked fish, and grilled chicken. It was simple, healthful eating, without crash dieting. After 15 months, 130 pounds were gone. "The key was that I never did anything

drastic," explains Julia. "You can't take a person who has never climbed a mountain and expect her to peak the summit."

For some, losing 130 pounds is reward enough, but Julia, who chronicled her weight loss in journal form, sent the story to a popular women's magazine and, after it was published, found herself deluged with letters from women asking for advice. Eventually, Julia's tale of weight loss picked up steam, and was followed with articles in the *National Enquirer*, plus guest spots on several daytime talk shows, including *Sally Jesse Raphael*. In 1997, at her new husband Patrick's urging, Julia penned her story in a self-published book, *The Easiest Diet I Never Went On* (The Health and Wellness Institute).

One day, Patrick came across a list of goals that his wife had scribbled to herself during the time of her marital separation. "I had written that I wanted to marry again, have another baby, go to the Oscars, write a book, and become Mrs. Missouri. He saw the [beauty pageant reference] and asked, 'Why haven't you done this?'" Next thing you know, the 5'8, 155-pound Julia found herself vying among 16 other women for the state honor, which she landed by nailing an in-depth phone interview. "Since they weren't holding local pageants, I was evaluated over the phone. I also sent in my bio and photos, and discussed my platform issue, which was the growing epidemic of obesity in our country," explains Julia.

That famous "gift of gab" paid off. "I was told that I had the highest score in the interview portion of the contest, so I can forever say I am the smartest...but not the prettiest!" she quips. Having integrated regular exercise into her now-slim life, Julia felt secure enough to join 52 stunning women onstage at the national competition in Las Vegas. She placed 14th.

"I was really proud of that," she says. "Even though some of these women were drop-dead beautiful, I had more self confidence."

Today, the 40-year-old Julia looks forward to seeing her new book, *Awaken the Diet Within: From Overweight to Looking Great—If I Can Do It, So Can You* (Warner Books), hit book stores in January. She also rounds out her income by writing motivational articles for *ediets.com*, and running her own website (*juliahavey.com*), which sells inspirational audio tapes and offers advice to women seeking weight loss assistance. "I'm a real live person with bills, car pool, soccer, you name it. But I managed to do this," says Julia. And those other goals on the list? The baby? The Academy Awards? Julia is confident. "I'll get to both of them this year." **W**

Hillary Quinn, a former copy director of *Mademoiselle* magazine, is a Seattle-based freelance writer.

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