

Julia Savage Captivates the Audience

By PATTI RINALDO
Woman's Editor

The bright little lady sat in her chair, well-poised and perfectly groomed, speaking for two solid hours on her experiences as a teacher of deaf children.

She had a quick wit, a natural smile, and she kept her audience totally captivated.

Admittedly, this isn't a feat in itself — but Miss Julia Savage is "past 90 years old" (her exact age is her "privileged" secret), and she is known by her friends and family to have more energy than "any 18-year-old!"

Her speech took place during the morning workshop of the recent Liberty Homemaker's meeting, held at the home

of Mrs. Edward Riester of West Liberty.

Retiring just 13 years ago, Miss Savage, a native of Wheeling, admitted she taught "considerably past retirement age, for I was asked to come back year after year."

Her teaching experiences were spent in Romney, W.Va.; St. Augustine, Fla.; Portland, Maine; Cape May, and Malone, N.Y.

She received her certificate for teaching of the deaf at the Pennsylvania Oral School for the Deaf.

There are two methods for teaching the deaf, Miss Savage explained, the manual and the oral method. Manualists use signs and finger spelling, while the oralists concentrate

on speech and lip reading.

Both methods are very good, she reiterated, but "the manualists claim that the ordinary public can't understand the speech of the deaf, and the other hand, the oralists feel the general public can't understand sign language." But most schools teach both methods, she noted.

"I found great reward working with the oral method," she expressed, "for deaf children are simply like any other children — they've just lost their sense of hearing."

And fortunately we no longer call our schools deaf and dumb asylums, the authority explained, "the children are simply handicapped."

The center for the deaf is located in Washington, D.C., founded by the late Alexander Graham Bell, whose wife was deaf. That city also contains a training center for pre-school age children, as well as an accredited college for deaf students, Miss Savage pointed out.

With a profoundly deaf child at the age of six, she said, "he doesn't know the name of anything. We start out very slowly, in small classes — no more than 10 in a room. We try to show him feelings and observations — all as individual work.

"The children feel the face, they look into the teacher's mouth and watch her tongue and teeth, but we never teach

the alphabet. We teach sounds — vowels and consonants as well as forms made by the appearance of the mouth, teeth and tongue.

"In the oral method, we use two charts — back sounds, front sounds and breath sounds and voice sounds."

Within the schools, we like to have the children mingle and do the same things other active children do, the bright-eyed lady explained. In the schools where she taught, she pointed out projects such as home economics clubs, shop projects, nature study clubs, child card clubs, social clubs, card clubs, etc.

"In one of my schools I was in charge of the social projects, and the students gave teas, wrote letters, invitations, thank-you notes, sympathy cards, and learned their manners explicitly.

"Deaf citizens are just as good Americans as anyone else," Miss Savage emphasized. "They are ambitious, and most of them have reputable jobs.

"And the deaf don't beg!" she told. "If someone comes to your door with a card saying he's deaf, he's pretending. Give him back a sign asking him his name and where he went to school, and he'll walk away. Don't ever give money to citizens who are faking deafness!"

The deaf citizens work harder than any other people, the speaker said. "They don't feel

disgraced. They're good in sports, they love dancing, they go to church and shopping, and are just as sociable and personable as anyone else. In our schools we try to make them as normal as possible."

"You know, everybody reads lips to some extent," Miss Savage told, "for if you look directly at the person you are speaking to, he will hear you better. But if you're ever speaking to a deaf person, don't move your lips any bigger or wider than usual — this just makes it more difficult for him, for it isn't normal."

She also had great praise for the advancements made in hearing aids for all levels of deafness.

Born and raised on Country Club Hill in Wheeling, Miss Savage now makes her home with her niece, the former Catherine Savage, and her husband, Wilbur Rammage of 15 Lynden Ave.

Tagging herself a "nomad," Miss Savage has visited most of the 50 states of the union, plus Canada, Bermuda and Nassau. She is also an active member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church.

When asked her secret for longevity, Miss Savage humbly replied, "Oh, I'm no different than anyone else. I've simply lived a long, active life. And I've enjoyed everything I've done. I have no secrets."

And does she want to reach that century mark?

"Oh, Lord no!" she laughed. "I've been around long enough."

But she turned out to be the envy — and the spirit of hope — for every woman attending the enlightening morning meeting.