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Wheeling Woman Dies at 110

Memorial services will be held Thursday for one of the nation's oldest citizens, 110-year-old Julia W. Savage, who died Monday in Peterson Hospital, Wheeling.

A resident of Peterson Hospital, formerly of Baytree Drive, Wheeling, she was born on Oct. 11, 1878, a daughter of the late Richard and Isabelle Campbell Savage.

She was a teacher for the hearing impaired in New England and a life-long member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Wheeling. She was baptized at St. Matthew's in 1878 at the church's former building on 12th Street. She remained a communicant with the church throughout her life.

Savage was the oldest member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and the oldest communicant in the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia.

She received her teaching degree from Brown University in Rhode Island as well as a certificate to work with the blind and deaf from a school in Scranton, Pa., in 1916.

Throughout her teaching career, she worked in Rhode Island, Florida, New York and Portland, Maine before retiring in her mid-80s. She also tutored students in New Mexico and Ohio, as well as teaching U.S. Army soldiers.

In addition, she worked at schools for the blind and deaf in Romney and Pittsburgh.

Savage kept a very active life until about four years ago, according to her niece, Catherine Ramage of Wheeling. Ramage said the pair would go shopping and to lunch.

"She enjoyed a long and happy life," Ramage said.

Liz Naranch, social worker with Peterson Hospital, said Savage was alert and liked to keep informed of world events. Although she had been blind for nearly seven years, she listened to tape recordings of U.S. News and World Report magazine. She also could feed herself and enjoyed peanut butter sandwiches. Naranch added that Savage didn't give up her driver's license until the age of 92.

"She had a great sense of humor," Naranch said. "On her 110th birthday she said she was going to skip the hundreds and just be 10."

Savage had been a resident of Peterson Hospital since 1980. During her stay in 1987, she was honored to be the first to light the hospital's Christmas poinsettia display which became part of the Festival of Lights celebration.

"She truly was a marvelous person," the Rev. Margaret Phillimore, priest associate of St. Matthew's, said. "She was always glad to talk to you and tell you stories. She was just a great, gracious lady of another generation."

In addition to her parents, she was also preceded in death by two brothers, Campbell and Edward; a sister, Amelia Singleton. Surviving are a nephew, Thomas W. Savage of Wheeling; a niece, Catherine Ramage of Wheeling.

Memorial services will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday in St. Elizabeth Chapel at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Matthew's Episcopal Church.