

Sign language expert helps deaf to join in services

By NANCY ANDERSEN
City Staff

For years, the deaf were shut out of church services. They sat patiently through the sermons, unaware of what was said. They couldn't join in when the hymns were sung.

But now the deaf can participate in worship services through the use of sign language and interpreters. Margie Kellim of the First Baptist Church of College Station uses sign language during services for the deaf.

Kellim earned a degree in education of the deaf from the University of Northern Colorado in 1972. In her spare time, Kellim said, she learned sign language and used it in teaching a Sunday school class for deaf children in Pueblo. This experience im-

proved her skill in using sign language.

Though there isn't always a sign for every word, Kellim said, "The deaf make it (sign language) extensive. Some signs are used for many different words by a different usage."

Kellim said she has a basic smattering of the language, and like any other language, fluency improves with regular practice.

"It's a challenge for me," she said. Kellim began interpreting in College Station in November, 1978, after she was approached by the friend of a deaf man. The man had heard that she knew sign language and wanted her to interpret the service for his friend, she said.

"I felt like it was the Lord's opportunity for me because it was dropped right in my lap," Kellim said. "I think

it's what the Lord wants me to do."

Kellim said she stands to the side of the altar and interprets the entire service, from the opening announcements to the last prayer.

Kellim interprets the hymns, enabling the deaf to "sing along" with their hands. Her husband serves as music director at the church.

There are two deaf people in the congregation, she said.

Kellim said the use of sign language in churches is definitely a national trend. "All the needs of the handicapped are being recognized and helped," she said.

A Southern Baptist church organization held a statewide conference for the deaf that was well-attended, she said. Also, many churches of all

denominations throughout the state have interpretation programs.

Kellim estimated that there are 20-30 deaf people in the Bryan-College Station area. A random survey of 13 local churches and synagogues revealed only two other churches — the United Pentecostal Church in Bryan and the LDS Church Institute of Religion in College Station — had sign language programs. The former has interpreters available at each service, and the latter has an interpreter who works exclusively with one deaf family.

A spokesman for the Institute said it used to have a class for learning sign language and possibly another could be started if enough people are interested. For more information, call 696-8202.

Speaker helps student government go

By MERIL EDWARDS
Campus Staff

The motion has been made and seconded. It is undebatable and unamendable. It requires a majority vote. All in favor signify by saying aye. All right, now those opposed say no. Thank you, the bill passes.

Robert Van Winkle, a junior agriculture education major, is a stickler for Roberts' Rules of Order and correct parliamentary procedure. But as speaker of the Texas A&M University student senate, he has to be.

It's Van Winkle's job to preside over the senate's bi-monthly meetings. He keeps the approximately 75 members of the senate working together and makes sure the meetings run as smoothly as possible.

"I try to give the debaters equal time," Van Winkle said. "It's my responsibility to see that we cover the necessary major items of legislation, but at the same time try to keep the meetings to a reasonable length of time."

Van Winkle appears to do his job well. The meetings are business-like and organized. He knows the rules by heart and uses them in quick succession as rapidly as his East Texas drawl will allow.

You're out of order. The floor is not open for debate at this time.

Before his election as speaker, Van Winkle served as parliamentarian, a position which enabled him to become familiar with the rules. His other experience includes four years of high school involvement with Future Farmers of America.

The senate acts as the voice of the Texas A&M student body. And Van Winkle said that how much this voice is heard depends on the senate's rapport with the administration.

"Our relationship with the administration is good," Van Winkle said. "They consider every recommendation we make."

Van Winkle said the senate officers meet with Dr. John Koldus, vice president for student services, every other week.

"We try to give him an idea of how the students feel," Van Winkle said, "and he lets us know plans the administration is making. Both Koldus and Dr. Miller (Texas A&M President Dr. Jarvis Miller) are very open-minded."

Van Winkle said the senate tries to make sure students know what their representatives are doing. They have used Battalion ads, flyers and surveys to get student opinion.

"Anything we do, we try to involve the students," he said. "A large percentage of the student body doesn't know what we're doing. We don't have the coverage we need. Visitors do come to our meetings depending on the issues and some come to committee meetings, too."

Van Winkle said much of the senate's work is done in committees. Some senators may never debate or present legislation in regular meetings, but each senator is in one of five committees.

These committees are academic affairs, external affairs, finance, rules and regulations and student services.

"I think we have one of the most active senates A&M has ever had," Van Winkle said. "If a senator isn't

doing his job, we can get him out by deducting points for being absent, late or leaving early, things like that."

Any student may run for a position in the senate. There are no inter-

ventions or special qualifications necessary other than having a 2.25 GPR.

Van Winkle said he probably won't run again for speaker, but will let someone else have a chance. As for any future political aspira-

tions, he said, "I have none. I don't love it that much. I plan to work in some part of agriculture."

"I do like working with people though, but there will always be a place in the community so I'll have to wait and see."



Robert "Rip" Van Winkle, speaker of the Texas A&M University student senate, presides over the organization's Wednesday meeting.

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