



Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind

Ann B. Ross

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Miss Julia, a recently bereaved and newly wealthy widow, is only slightly bemused when one Hazel Marie Puckett appears at her door with a youngster in tow and unceremoniously announces that the child is the bastard son of Miss Julia's late husband. Suddenly, this longtime church member and pillar of her small Southern community finds herself in the center of an unseemly scandal--and the guardian of a wan nine-year-old whose mere presence turns her life upside down.

With razor-sharp wit and perfect "Steel Magnolia" poise, Miss Julia speaks her mind indeed--about a robbery, a kidnapping, and the other disgraceful events precipitated by her husband's death. Fast-paced and charming, with a sure sense of comic drama, a cast of crazy characters, and a strong Southern cadence, *Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind* will delight listeners from start to end.

Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind Details

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Author : Ann B. Ross

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From Reader Review Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind for online ebook

Jonathan says

I was in a book slump but I read this and it got me out of it! Amazing book.

Berit??? says

This was a fun quirky start to a series....

Miss Julia has recently been widowed and now she is taking care of her Dead husband's illegitimate child.... but that's not all, she also befriends his mistress, and together all of them form an unusual family unit with some other characters thrown in... there really wasn't all that much of a mystery to this book, the mystery might actually be why is Julia so naïve? But I could see getting attached to these characters and wanting to see what they do next....

Lady Jane says

Enjoyable, light fiction, set in NC, I liked Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind. However I **loved** Miss Julia!

When Miss Julia's husband dies unexpectedly, Miss Julia's sterile--on multiple levels--marriage ends and life as she never imagined begins. Having lived the stereotypically dependent, Southern church woman's life to this point in her 60s, Miss Julia is slowly transformed into a strong, sassy, Southern woman by dramatic and sometimes comical circumstances outside her control. And, throughout the book, she speaks her mind, offering wry, witty, piercing observations about human nature, life and hypocrisy. Miss Julia has a lot to say and every word is a bell ringer, even if you don't necessarily agree with her on every point...bless her heart. ;-)

I was further delighted by Miss Julia's inner conflicts and ultimate transformation, as she struggled with the emotions raised by the undeniable proof of her husband's loveless nature, attempted exploitation by people purporting to care for her, and introduction of strangers into her family life. She was very real with herself and God as she processed it all, coming out in a much better place than when she started.

In the midst of this, Miss Julia and her companions have a variety of hilarious and dangerous adventures, becoming friends and then "chosen" family. Characters are frequently revealed to be not in substance what their superficial exteriors indicate, which is fitting for a book that skewers Southern duplicity.

I accepted this book as diverting, light fiction filled with sassy backtalk and self-discovery. I wasn't disappointed and look forward to reading the next book in this series.

Lisa says

These days I have to give some special stars to anyone who can make me laugh and Ann B. Ross did just that in her second book about Miss Julia. This book which is part comedy, part mystery is sure to delight. I recommend it for good entertainment.

BJ Rose says

Julia has always done what the men in her life told her to do ("When Papa said 'Jump', I was always the first one in the air"). At least she had always done as told until her husband of 44 years died of a heart attack ("Right in our driveway. In his new Buick Park Avenue.") Then she found out that this man she had always honored and obeyed had a mistress and a son - a son who was dropped off on her doorstep because Julia's philandering husband had made no arrangement for the mistress ("Wesley Lloyd didn't leave me a red cent... not even the house I been livin' in some twelve years now"). And off goes the mistress to get some training, leaving her son with Julia. Then strange things begin happening, and Julia begins to speak her mind - and change her behavior!

A very enjoyable read, and I already have the next in the series.

Amy says

I'm sorry. I really wanted to like Miss Julia, but I found her a bit annoying. I think it was more that I was annoyed by the whole avoidance of truths as being the way to find solutions. Julia did show some pluck, finally, at the end, and why she couldn't see how darling Sam was, I'll never understand.

There's more in this series and I have them, but I am not sure I'll read them right away, or at all, though I will register them to be given out at the 2007 Convention. I have been saving, hoarding and collecting books with a Southern theme or by a Southern author for over a year now, and am finally starting to register them. Why? For my contribution to the 2007 BookCrossing Convention (which is here in Charleston SC) Goodie Bags! Or for a Southern Books table. Or for a Gift Basket, Door Prize or whatever purpose the prize patrol deems worthy. This is one such book. If I haven't read it (or another copy of it) already, I'm hoping to get it read before the convention. Then it'll go into a tidy stack labeled "Convention Books". Each one originating with me bears a little sticker on it saying it originated its travels at the 07 Convention and has the southern theme. Enjoy! (And don't forget to let the book check in before you release it!)

Donna Girouard says

Okay, so I didn't exactly FINISH, and here's why:

This book is written as a first person narrator with a down-home-sy voice that (at first) makes Miss Julia very likable and trustworthy. However, as the narrative continues, there are a couple of things here and there that just don't seem plausible. Twice that I remember, I rolled my eyes but kept reading, suspending my disbelief (or, at least, trying to). THEN somewhere around page 190, Miss Julia does something that is so completely

out of character and, furthermore, REACTS in such a way that is so out of character, that I completely lost interest. I lost faith in her and in the book such that I have no desire to read the last third. I don't care how it ends.

Characters can certainly surprise the readers; however, this one went too far.

Cathy Daniel says

What a delightful book!!! I loved it so much!! Miss Julia was a little prickly in the beginning but then she slowly came around and I grew to love her and her golden heart under it all ♥? the characters were hilarious as were the situations they got into. I must get #2 asap!

Susan says

I had an interesting time deciding how to rate this book. Overall, I really enjoyed the read.

However, there were moments during the book where I want to throw it across the room. 'Really?!?', I yelled (mostly inside my head), 'You [Miss Julia] are naive to the point of idiocy!! Who does that?!?'. But then I too a step back, and realized that Miss Julia is exactly the type of person who would be that naive, truly that naive. And that is the moment that the brilliance of the writing hit me. 'OF COURSE!', I now yelled (still mostly inside my head). When people are raised in and/or live for long periods of time in families and/or relationships that are psychologically and emotionally abusive, as did Julia, they literally do get to where they do not know their own minds. People in this type of abusive situation are so used to substituting someone else's judgments for their own that they stop realizing that they even have their own ideas. And that is the place where Ross's writing becomes so fantastic.

This book is essentially a coming-of-age book but sometimes the reader forgets this as the protagonist is a senior citizen (presumably long 'of age'). However, it is not until the death of her husband, with the triggering event of the arrival of the mistress and son, that Miss Julia starts to figure out who she is as a human being independent of the dictates of the male, self-appointed authority figures around her. Her growth through this process is wonderful to see, even if it is a rocky process, occasionally causing the reader to want to throw the book and yell at the people inside it. But, it is these bumps and hurdles, and slip backs that make the process, and the characters, seem more real.

Miss Julia is also not the only one going through growth processes. Lillian, Hazel Marie, Little Lloyd, and some of the others all start to look at the world a different way and to make changes in themselves. The push back from some of the other characters in response to these developments is, unfortunately, all too real too. Anyone who has worked on healing and separating from abusive relationships can attest that those on the other side of the relationship, and those who, though not necessarily abusive themselves, are used to someone behaving in a compliant way, will pushback against that person's progress in order to maintain the existing power dynamics. To see the characters grow and to see them interact with one another was very satisfying as they each 'came of age'.

I will be looking up other books in this series.

Mitch says

My summer reading so far has been mostly sappy romances or silly comedies intended for women. And, although I am a 27 year old male, I'm ok with that! Chick lit can be pretty entertaining, and to me, that is the exact kind of material I like to busy myself with while lounging on the deck or at a cabin. "Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind" by Ann B. Ross is a perfect example of this. It didn't blow my mind or leave me thinking profound thoughts (and I'm sure I will forget all about it in a week); however it had enough entertainment value to keep me satisfied.

Miss Julia is an elderly lady who is recovering from the surprise death of her husband of many, many years. She is a loyal, southern church-going woman who was always devoted to her husband and small town community. But then she gets the shock of her life when a trashy looking younger woman drops a 10 year-old boy at her door, claiming the baby daddy is Miss Julia's late husband. The young woman then flees to pursue a beauty career, promising to return. Julia is shocked yet again, and rightfully fueled with anger. She decides to let the boy stay, and is only confused more when the church who should be supportive actually wants a big chunk of her husband's will! To make matters even more worse, she discovers the corrupt family of young Junior is determined to try to get all of the will money as well, and are willing to pursue any sort of dirty crime to obtain it!

Oh, poor Miss Julia! Along this crazy roller coaster of events she learns more things about herself than she ever discovered her entire life. She also finally does what she never truly has done before: speak her mind.

The events of this book are totally far-fetched and unbelievable. On the plus side, it is hilarious to see how Julia deals with her wacky situations and to see her fun transformation from closed-minded housewife to blunt and intelligent. The supporting characters (her maid and roommate) are lovable and sweet, and if anything this book is just plain fun. However, I found some of it repetitive and almost too simple in terms of vocabulary and substance.

It was a good summer read and fulfilled its entertainment duties. Will I read any more books in the Miss Julia series? Probably not. But I do not regret reading this decent first entry.

Ina says

It's funny and heartwarming, this story about a Southern lady who's just found out that her recently deceased husband has a 9-year old boy. As the story progresses, I grow in fondness of Miss Julia, who is the epitome of a lady with a mind of her own. I'm hooked by the charming, lovable characters - from the loyal Lillian (Miss Julia's helper and right-hand woman), to Deputy Bates (Miss Julia's very own alarm system), to Binkie (Miss Julia's smart lawyer, trying to prove herself in a town where she grew up), to Sam Murdoch (the affable long-time family friend and retired lawyer, and perhaps something more). The villains are laughable, perhaps because of their folly. And lest you think this Southern novel resembles the laidback pace of life there, the plot thickens with splatters of blood, kidnapping, and car chase! A true gem!

Darlene says

I read this book for a group I belong to. I'm not sure what I was expecting.... I suppose my expectations were

sort of low. I thought I might be entertained for a few hours; but what I found was a mystery of sorts that really had some depth and complexity and raised some big questions to mull over. This story, set in North Carolina, features a charming, traditional Southern woman... Julia Springer. At the beginning of the story, we discover that Miss Julia has lost her husband, Wesley Lloyd, suddenly and unexpectedly several months before. Miss Julia is trying to get her bearings.. trying to become accustomed to living alone, making her own decisions and coming to grips with the news that she is actually a very wealthy widow. Her unexpected wealth came as much as a shock as Wesley Lloyd;s death as her departed husband had never let on that they were wealthy. As a matter of fact, she had believed quite the opposite as her husband had always provided her with a small allowance for household expenses and specifically told her to make it last.

As we quickly discover, Miss Julia's wealth is not the only aspect of her late husband's life that she was unaware of. She also discovers that Wesley Lloyd had been unfaithful and as if that wasn't humiliating enough, that infidelity had produced a child.. Little Lloyd... who was left on her doorstep by his distraught mother who needed someone to care for him while she obtained training so that she could support herself and her son.

What follows this bombshell is a sometimes funny, sometimes poignant and even thought provoking story of Miss Julia, Little lloyd and his mother, Hazel Marie Puckett... along with a cast of very colorful characters. This story isn't a typical 'cozy' mystery but it does contain a robbery, a kidnapping and a very hypocritical televangelist , whose greed is ultimately exposed.

Miss Julia, despite her shame, anger and humiliation ultimately shows what she is made of.. underneath that genteel exterior. She learns to speak her mind... speak the truth and become... for the first time, a truly independent woman who is in control of her own life.

This is a wonderful story about a woman who learns to stand up for herself and speak the truth... regardless of the consequences. I highly recommend this book!

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

The writing style is spot on if you've ever been buttonholed by an older woman of Southern extraction who wants to tell ya all about it. The first third read very quickly, as we are presented with her situation (newly widowed, discovers how wealthy her husband really was, is presented with her husband's "lovechild"--and why did she never use that term that was common in her youth?)

But then Miz Julia simply became annoying because if she was that angry at being kept in the dark, kept on a short leash etc. surely she would have cut loose? At least to the point of getting central AC that summer, since we are told that it's almost a year since The Mister passed. The plot becomes ever more convoluted and unbelievable, in the style of 1960s romances and rom-coms, where one question and one answer would have cleared everything up. With a policeman in the house, who is blissfully unaware of all these people coming and going. Oh yeah, that's right--media policemen are always idiots. Sigh.

There is very little character development here, because the authoress seems to want two-dimensional stereotypes to play with. Hazel Marie and Lillian are the only ones who seem to have any human warmth and intelligence. I expected the main character to learn to like the child she first refers to as "the little bastard" but that doesn't really happen. No wonder her husband treated her like a ten year old; she acts like one--a selfish one at that.

I also took exception to the stereotype that every. single. Christian. in the book is a hypocrite, a gossip, a liar, and out for what they can get. Yes, there are plenty of tares among the wheat, but I smelled a burning, smouldering issue here. Will I read another volume? I doubt it. So many better books, so little time.

Karen says

I loved this book (it's the second time I've read it) It is so light hearted, taking situations that can/do happen in life and letting us experience through them the feelings, frustrations, worries you name it without having to actually go through it. The reason it appeals is that we have all been in situations that we think we have under control and come to find out that nothing is within our control.

Miss Julia is fighting so many areas at once that trying to keep it all straight in her head , yet it is beyond her capabilities, but having a loving, if you can call him that, husband that plans her live isn't all it is made up to be either. Thankfully she does have a lawyer and police officer at her disposal that can and do help her out of the mess she finds herself in. And how did she get into this mess you might ask... by trying to do the right thing.

There are many in this series and I know that I will go back to them when I need a break and a good laugh at life in general.

Amy says

The perfect combination of cozy and mystery. It's short enough and fast paced enough to read in one sitting if your family is content to eat ramen noodles for dinner.

D says

Very southern lit. Old South meets New South.

Miss Julia is an older woman (60s? which doesn't seem that old anymore!), recently widowed who ends up with a bit of trouble on her hands in the form of her dead husband's "secret family:" his 9-yr-old son & his mistress. Hilarity ensues.

The characters are funny southern caricatures. Lots of importance on "how everything looks" to other people. What would the pastor think? what would the townsfolk think? Everyone who should, gets his comeuppance in the end. And Miss Julia ends up A-Okay.

Fast read, just silly and easy for a rainy day with a leg in a cast, which mine is for 4 weeks.

Michele says

OMG. How could I not know about this book till years later? I guess it worked out okay, because by the time

I found it there were almost a dozen more, so I got to savor them all without having to wait.

NYT romance author Shirley Jump says, "Figure out your character's worst nightmare and put them inside it, and there's your story. Ross must feel the same way, otherwise how could she have the genius to start a book that starts with a knock on the door. But not just any door--it belongs to Miss Julia, a respectable middle-aged widow, whose Church attending husband lived an impeccable, if sterile, life. And not just any knock--her late husband's mistress, left penniless by Wesley Lloyd's heart attack, dropping off her love child on Miss Julia's porch, so that she can learn a trade and support herself and her son.

What follows is the funniest, most charming, and surprisingly heartfelt tale as Miss Julia struggles to accept the lie of her past, move past her loathing for Wesley Lloyd's bastard son, and re-invent herself at the ripe old age of 60--well, Ross isn't telling, so neither can I.

The flavor of the church-based Southern town, Miss Julia's inner and outer turmoil at her late husband's betrayal, and her ultimate acceptance and generosity of spirit and pocketbook make for an eye-burning, side splitting, can't put down read. I think what makes this novel rise above the rest, aside from Ross's adept writing and sly humor, is how Ross lets us peek into Miss Julia's soul, sharing her shame, regrets, bitterness, and ultimately, triumph. If you're looking for a book that entertains on the surface, while transcending the personal to the universal without preaching, fix yourself a glass of lemonade (with mint, of course) and start savoring.

Caroline says

Poor Miss Julia. Having just buried her controlling husband who died of a heart attack and learning just how much he was worth, she starts planning how to start spending some of her inheritance when the doorbell rings and she finds herself facingher husband's mistress and 9 year old son.

If that wasn't bad enough, the mistress leaves her son with Julia and flees. Everything just spirals out of control at that point. Julia has to fight a greedy pastor, a conniving doctor, a break in, kidnappings and harboring potential fugitives, but she's just feisty enough to keep her head almost.

Bursting with humor, this was a fun read.

Barbara says

Miss Julia's husband passed away suddenly leaving her the sole heir of his considerable estate. Including, unexpectedly, his illegitimate son. Miss Julia has her hands full when Little Lloyd's mama drops him off for her to care for while she goes to beauty school. Everything goes down hill from there as Miss Julia deals with her house being broken into and ransacked, and her minister conspiring to have her declared incompetent to get her money. Being a widow with money is challenging. Everyone is out to get their piece of her pie. Everything works out in the end and Miss Julia ends up with her cup full to overflowing with more than she ever knew she wanted.

Amy Bond says

Found this (and the 2nd in the series) for 50 cents at the used bookstore so I figured 'Why not?!' Now I know why they were so cheap.

Miss Julia is presented as spunky, determined, having a backbone of steel, etc. All I saw was a slightly whiny and easily fooled martyr that had her head in the sand too long. I know total trust & obedience to one's husband is very common among that generation (I know a ton of ladies that way) but I think the author swung back & forth between that & the so-called spunk. One minute Miss Julia is planning a covert mission to Spartanburg and the next she's letting her pastor (who she's caught trying to swindle her already) convince her she's a nymphomaniac.

Maybe it's a good read for women who are this generation with these views but it just irritated me. Miss Julia is definitely NOT a 'Steel Magnolia.'
