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Office of University
Communications

December 2, 2016

Valerie M. Parry Exhibited Lifelong Love for Learning During 25-Year Career at GWU

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Members of the Gardner-Webb community are mourning the death of the University's former public services librarian, director of the Dover Memorial Library, and dean of libraries. Valerie M. Parry, 70, passed away unexpectedly at her home on Dec. 2, 2016.

Dr. Tracy Jessup, vice president for the Office of Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University, praised Parry's commitment to GWU and her love for people. "Librarians are some of the most unsung heroes of higher education," he shared. "I certainly consider Valerie among the unsung heroes at Gardner-Webb University. She didn't like the spotlight, but she was deeply committed to her profession and to our community of faith and learning."

Parry grew up on the east end of Long Island, N.Y., where she discovered a love for libraries that led to a career of more than 40 years. Prior to coming to Gardner-Webb, she worked more than 16 years in the library at Southampton College in New York. In 1984, Parry started her career at Gardner-Webb as a public services librarian with duties that included circulation, reference, and periodical sections.

"One of my favorite things about librarianship is empowering people," she shared in a recent interview. "You can tell somebody a fact or show them a fact. But if you can show them how they can find facts and gain knowledge, you see those light bulb moments. They say, 'I can do this,' and you say, 'of course you can.'"

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Parry reported her greatest joy was raising her daughter, Shannon Parry Pingitore, who lives in Fayetteville, N.C. Pingitore graduated from Gardner-Webb in 1998 and owns a small business. "Shannon turned out to be the greatest delight of my life," Parry offered. "My second greatest was my library work."

After retiring in 2008, Parry lived in Boiling Springs and enjoyed staying connected to Gardner-Webb. She hoped to be remembered as someone who cared about learning, "the joy of the written word," and what was best for the library and the University.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).