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Best-Selling Author Ron Rash to Visit GWU

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Office of University
Communications

September 25, 2014

Gardner-Webb Alumnus to Address Appalachian Writers Association as Book Set for Film Premiere

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Gardner-Webb University alumnus and best-selling author Ron Rash is set to visit GWU as he gains worldwide attention for “Serena,” his novel that was adapted into a feature film set to premiere next month.

Rash will visit the campus Oct. 3 to give the keynote address at the Appalachian Writers Association’s annual awards banquet, part of the Southern Appalachian Culture Series conference hosted at Gardner-Webb. The 1976 GWU alum, also currently the John Parris Distinguished Professor of Appalachian Studies at Western Carolina University, will discuss Appalachian writing and read from some of his works.

One of his works, “Serena,” is currently set to hit the big screen in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Oct. 10. The novel features a couple, played in the movie by Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence and Oscar nominee Bradley Cooper, who fight to log an area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the early 20th Century. “I find the fight for the Smoky Mountains National Park a fascinating story,” Rash shared. “I wanted to write a book that reminded people who visit today that it’s not a virgin forest. Those mountains were almost completely scalped. It’s a way of reminding us how easily something like the forest can be lost.”

The film version of “Serena” is currently set for release in the United States in February, Rash said, adding that he was minimally involved in the transformation of his book from novel to film. “Once a director gets the book it’s going to be their artistic vision,” he offered. “As a writer, you hope they capture the essence of the book you feel is most important. The writer has to step away and realize it’s the director’s vision of the book as a springboard for the film.”

As the world awaits the screen release of “Serena,” Rash continues to work on other writing projects. A new book of short stories, titled “Something Rich and Strange,” is set for release in November. The work includes selections from the past 35 years, as well as new stories. A new novel, “Above the Waterfall,” will soon go to an editor for review, Rash shared. The book will explore a fish kill on a mountain river.

Reservations are required for the upcoming writers association's award banquet. Rash said he's eager to visit his alma mater and share his experiences and his work. "I have had such fine experiences at Gardner-Webb," he reflected. "I had great teachers, particularly Dr. Gil Blackburn and Dr. Joyce Brown. I grew up in Boiling Springs and I get to see my mom and some old friends, so it's a homecoming as well."

Since 1983, the Appalachian Writers Association has served as a sustaining and encouraging force for all writers writing in and about the general Appalachian region. The Southern Appalachian Culture Series embraces and showcases the culture, literature, and traditions of Southern Appalachia. The effort is dedicated to finding the literary gems and scholars throughout the Southern Appalachian region. Every two years a conference focusing on a theme or featuring a nationally renowned writer is held at Gardner-Webb University in celebration of Southern Appalachian culture. For more information on the writers association and culture series conference, visit soappculture.com.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with 60 major and minor professional programs of study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service, and leadership.