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Author, Dr. Joseph Webb, Asks Community for Information, Stories about Webb



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— A Gardner-Webb professor is conducting research for a new biography of Fay Lamar Webb Gardner, to whom Gardner-Webb University owes its name and its existence – and he wants the community's help.

The author, GWU communications professor Dr. Joseph Webb, is currently pouring through the extensive and previously unexamined collection of Webb Gardner's papers in the Dover Memorial Library archives. "Fay lived to be 82, and she was a prolific writer and an extensive record keeper," Webb said. "I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of coming to know Fay better, in her own words."

Fay Webb Gardner was the wife of O. Max Gardner, the Cleveland County native and Governor of N.C. during the heart of the Great Depression. After Gardner's term, the Gardners moved to Washington D.C., where Fay remained active and highly honored in national Democratic politics, even long after her husband's death.

Though one previous biography offers an historical overview of Gardner's life, Webb said his archival research will enable him to tell the story "not just of where she went and what she did, but of who Fay really was, and how she became the person she grew to be."

Webb suspects that, given the prominence of her husband, Fay's own legacy, particularly at Gardner-Webb University, has been slightly overshadowed. "Max's influence for Gardner-Webb was significant, but he died in 1947, long before Gardner-Webb had achieved its status as one of the region's elite Christian institutions," said Webb. "It was Fay who stepped in after he died, and for nearly 20 years, poured her energy and her resources into bolstering the little school in her hometown. Without Fay, there would certainly have been no Gardner-Webb as we know it. It's time her story was told."

In addition to his archival research, Webb hopes to discover other stories, information, documents and insights about Fay Webb's life from community members who knew her, or perhaps whose relatives knew her. "Unfortunately, many of Fay's generation are no longer with us, but I suspect there are some people around Cleveland County and the surrounding area who have great information, and whose contributions to this project would be invaluable."

For those interested in sharing resources or insight about Fay Webb Gardner, Joseph Webb asks that they please contact him at 704-466-1654 or jwebb1@gardner-webb.edu