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Gardner-Webb Community Mourns Loss of Longtime Friend and Supporter, Bill Masters

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JUNE 28, 2022



▲ Bill Masters is honored at a luncheon in 2011 when the Bill and Sue Masters Athletic Facility was named.

Masters Field, Bill and Sue Masters Athletic Facility Named for Couple's Impact on Baseball and Tennis Programs

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Gardner-Webb University community is remembering Bill Masters, of Shelby, N.C., a longtime friend and supporter of the baseball program, who passed away at age 94 on June 25, 2022. Masters grew up in Easley, S.C., with a deep love for baseball and once said that he would rather play baseball than eat.

“Bill Masters was one of a kind, and he is leaving an indelible legacy behind at Gardner-Webb,” asserted GWU President William Downs. “Always kind, always supportive, always there with a smile and a story. We will joyfully remember him each time the Runnin’ Bulldogs take to the field that bears his name.”

Masters graduated from Easley High School in 1945, served several years at Fort Bragg with the U.S. Army Air Corps and was honorably discharged in 1947. After his time in the army, Masters attended Clemson University, where he earned a degree in textile manufacturing and was a walk-on for the Tigers baseball team. After graduation, he went on to play semi-pro baseball. Masters spent most of his career in the textile industry, working for the White Horse Cotton Mill in Greenville, S.C., Riegel Textiles in Ware Shoals, S.C., and Cone Mills in Cliffside, N.C., where he served as production manager. It was while in Cliffside that he began his relationship with Gardner-Webb in the early 1970s.



Masters described why he and his wife Sue supported Gardner-Webb in an article written by the University in 2011. “I was inspired that Cone Mills was involved in supporting private colleges like Gardner-Webb, and I wanted to be a part of that kind of community,” Masters said in the story. “Through the years, Sue and I have seen Gardner-Webb grow from a two-year college to university status, and we have continued to see improvements along the way. This is a thriving university that we just want to be a part of.”

Head Baseball Coach Jim Chester said that Masters touched countless lives through his example and encouraging words. “It is hard to put a number on how many Gardner-Webb Baseball student-athletes Bill Masters impacted since his involvement with the University,” Chester affirmed. “His message to our team was always simple—be kind, be respectful, help others, and love your time on the field with your teammates! His love for Gardner-Webb and our program has been something that we will cherish and remember forever.”

Masters support spanned several decades and helped transform both the baseball and tennis programs. In 2008, the GWU baseball field was named in honor of Bill for his generous support to GWU baseball. Then in 2011, the University named the Bill and Sue Masters Athletic Facility, which houses baseball and tennis offices, in recognition of their continued generosity.

“We are saddened to hear of Bill’s passing,” said Nate Evans, vice president of Advancement. “The University has lost not only a friend but a dedicated fan. Bill’s faithful support of student athletes is a testament to his strong character, and his legacy will positively influence lives for years to come.”

Masters’ impact was recognized again in 2012, when he received the North Carolina Baptist Foundation’s (NCBF) Heritage Award. The Heritage Award honors individuals for their exemplary giving and service to organizations associated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

View the obituary [here](https://www.cecilmburtonfuneralhome.com/obituary/bill-masters) (<https://www.cecilmburtonfuneralhome.com/obituary/bill-masters>).

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina’s recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty.

Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.