

# The Gray Legacy

How a Family Helped Change a City



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## Triggering growth



Statue of Bowman Gray.

There are signs around Wake Forest School of Medicine today that point to the family whose dedication and money brought medical education to Winston-Salem.

Outside the school's entrance on Hawthorne Hill, for example, there's a statue of Bowman Gray Sr. It was Gray whose will established the fund that led to the relocation of the medical school from Wake Forest, N.C.

There's the Gray Building, named after James A. Gray Jr., the brother of Bowman Sr. It was James Gray who helped guide the decision to donate his brother's money toward the school, and whose own trust fund donation of nearly \$1 million bolstered the medical school during its struggling early years.

There are the continued and frequent "I went to Bowman Gray" or "I taught at Bowman Gray" references by graduates and teachers in deference to the school's official name until 1997. And the little signs, like the label on a mail slot of the post office branch in Watlington Hall that reads simply, "BGSM student mail."

Time, though, erodes institutional memory.

Progress brings change.

Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center today is a far cry from North Carolina Baptist Hospital of 1939, the institution the trustees of Wake Forest College agreed to merge their medical school with, a nearly unheard of 110-mile relocation that would separate that medical school from the college's main campus. It was the



Wake Forest College in Wake Forest, North Carolina, in 1918.

medical school's move a decade later that would trigger a push—this time led by the Reynolds family—to move the rest of Wake Forest College to Winston-Salem, as well.

And those anchor families whose names are so closely linked to the history of Winston-Salem? They have a way of being spread apart by the same forces of time and progress.

To be sure, foundations and trusts set up by the Gray, Reynolds and Hanes families continue to provide financial support for many local, state and even national programs.

*“It was about building a community.”*

— Bowman Gray IV

But there are no Reynolds family members in the hierarchy at Reynolds American. Nor are there any more Grays at Reynolds—where Bowman and James and Bowman’s son, Bowman Jr., served as president—or at Wachovia Bank, which was founded by James Alexander Gray, the father of Bowman and James. Indeed, the Wachovia name is gone now, too—the institution bought out by Wells Fargo, and the last branches in North Carolina converting over in late 2011.

Dr. James Toole, a neurologist who came to Bowman Gray School of Medicine in 1962 and started the Stroke Center, knows that the era of Bowman and James Gray was vastly different.

“The Grays and the Haneses and the Reynoldses were beneficent dictators and they were in friendly competition,” Toole says. “And so if one did something, the other would want to do a bit more. And it was great for the city.”

Indeed, Wake Forest School of Medicine exists today because of the vision and strength of those figures of its past.

People like Dr. Coy C. Carpenter, the longtime medical school dean whose name today graces the school’s library and who pushed for the relocation and expansion from a two-year to a four-year school.

People like attorney Odus Mull of Shelby, a six-term state legislator and Speaker of the House who served with Carpenter on a committee to study the creation of a four-year state medical school but who, once the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill turned down the possibility of relocating, joined the Wake Forest College committee that wound up accepting the Gray family’s money.

People like the Grays, whose commitment to education in general, much less what became Bowman Gray School of Medicine, never wavered.

Bowman Gray IV was born in Winston-Salem and lived his early years here, before his father left a job at a subsidiary of Reynolds and moved the family to Paris. After spending most of his adult life in Minnesota, Gray, now 42, moved back to his native city in 2005 when his daughter was accepted into Wake Forest University. He is well aware of the legacy set in motion by his great grandfather and great granduncle.

“It was about building a community,” Gray says, “looking at it with an eye toward the future.”



James A. Gray Sr., Bowman Gray Jr. and Gordon Gray.



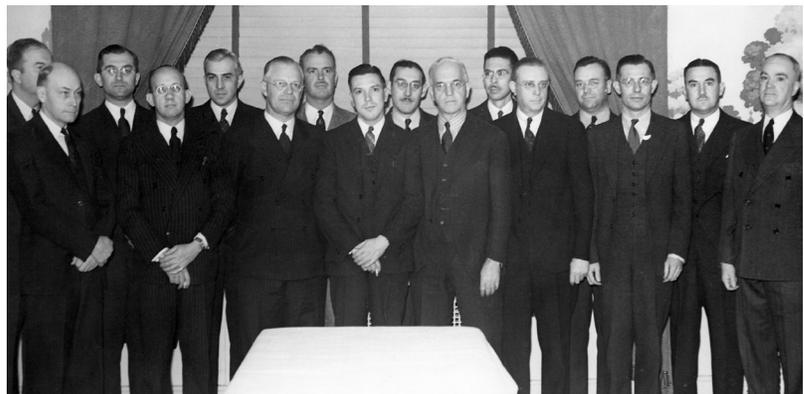
Carpenter went to Wake Forest College as an undergraduate and then attended Syracuse School of Medicine with specialized training in pathology.

Carpenter quickly absorbed the responsibility of leading the medical school, though as president Kitchin also retained the title of medical school dean. Carpenter officially became dean in 1936.

The first hint of moving the medical school surfaced in 1929, when the North Carolina Baptist State Convention met in Shelby, with Kitchin and Carpenter representing the Wake Forest church. They discussed the idea of interesting Winston-Salem leaders in providing money to move the medical school and affiliating it with the 88-bed N.C. Baptist Hospital, which had opened in 1923.

Carpenter, whose book "The Story of Medicine at Wake Forest University" was published in 1970, says the idea was greeted positively, but in the era of the Great Depression, no money could be found.

The idea died.



The 1937-38 faculty of Wake Forest College School of Medical Sciences.



N.C. Baptist Hospital opened in 1923 in Winston-Salem.

## A Winston-Salem icon dies

*"I can't pay you  
anything but I can  
give you some stock."*

— R.J. Reynolds to  
Bowman Gray Sr.

In 1935, the Association of American Medical Colleges began to speak out against two-year medical colleges, eventually proposing that they be eliminated. Such schools offered training in basic medical sciences, with the graduates then having to find a four-year school to accept them for the final two years of their education, which were devoted to clinical training.

In North Carolina, the association's edict would have spelled the end both for Wake Forest's school as well as the state medical school at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. At the time only Duke University had a four-year medical school.

Although the association eventually dropped its recommendation because of strong opposition by the two-year schools, the financial problems of the smaller schools made it clear that things had to change. North Carolina began to consider whether it should create a four-year state medical school, establishing a commission that was to make recommendations before the 1939 session of the legislature.

In Winston-Salem, 1935 was the year that one of its major figures died.

Bowman Gray Sr., 61, suffered a fatal heart attack, the second in just a few days, while on a five-week cruise in the North Atlantic with his wife, Nathalie, and sons Bowman Jr. and Gordon.

It was a difficult and sudden blow for one of Winston-Salem's most prominent families.



Bowman Gray Sr.

Bowman Gray Sr. was the son of James Alexander Gray, the co-founder of Wachovia Bank. How Bowman Sr. wound up first as president and then chairman of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. is a story that his grandson, former state Rep. Lyons Gray, enjoys recounting.

“Bowman Gray was a teller at the Wachovia Bank in 1895 and Mr. Reynolds would apparently walk in and make his deposits with this young man,” says Lyons Gray, who is now senior advisor to the president of the University of North Carolina.

Bowman Sr. had dropped out of UNC Chapel Hill after a year, but R.J. Reynolds took a liking to him and asked him to be a salesman and open up the “northern territories.” So Bowman Sr. moved to Baltimore, where he met and married Nathalie. Their two sons, Bowman Jr. and Gordon, were born there.

Every day, Bowman Sr. “started out with a 40-pound bag of smoking and chewing tobacco—there weren’t any manufactured cigarettes as you know today—and he wasn’t allowed to come back until all 40 pounds had been sold,” recounts Lyons Gray, the lone family member of his generation who has remained in Winston-Salem.

In 1912, R.J. Reynolds invited Bowman Sr. back to Winston-Salem to take over accounting at the tobacco company.

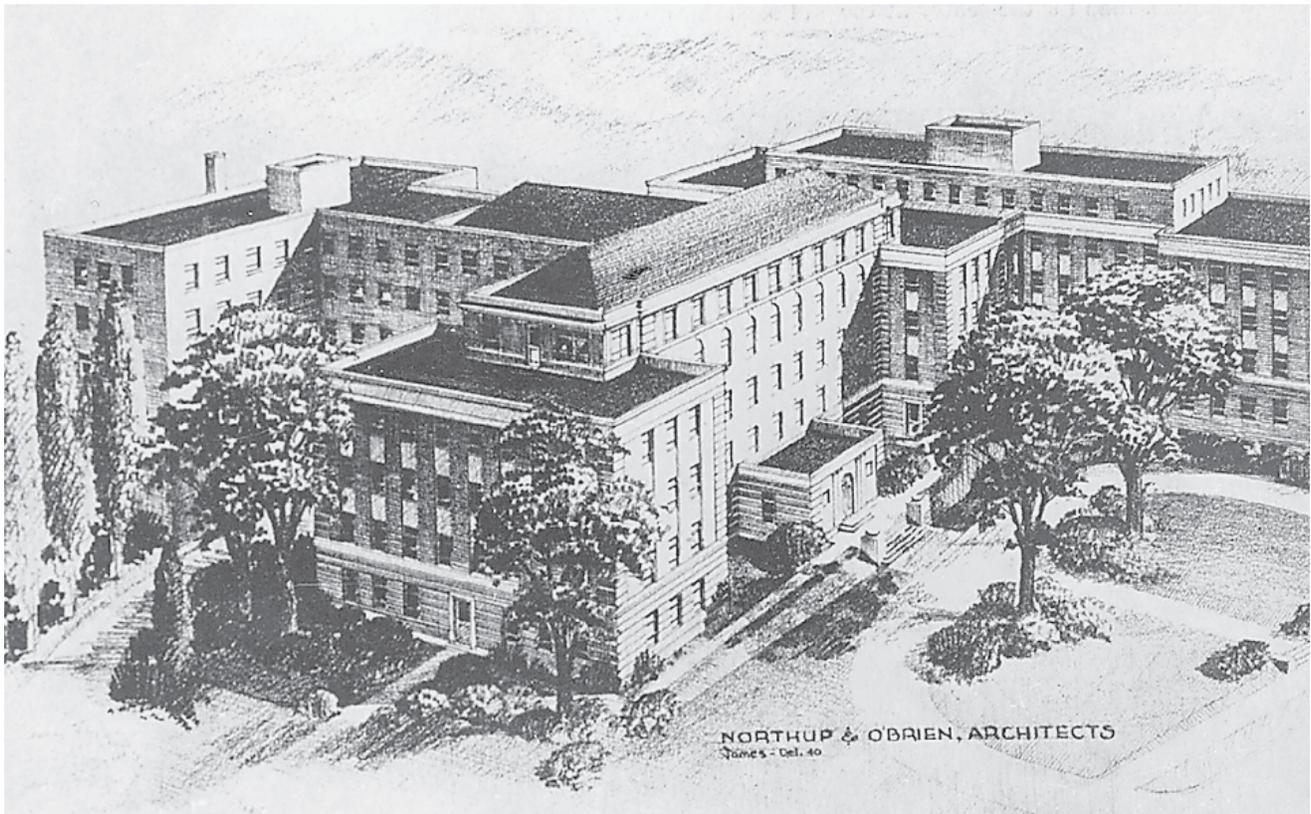
“In the early days, Mr. Reynolds said to Bowman Sr., ‘I can’t pay you anything but I can give you some stock. It’s not worth much.’”

As Bowman Sr.’s stature at Reynolds grew, so did his stock. He became president of the company in 1924 and chairman in 1931.

His brother, James, meanwhile, also joined Reynolds, and he, too, would eventually serve as president, from 1936 to 1945, and as chairman from 1949 to 1951.

The Gray legacy at Reynolds continued when Bowman Jr. served as president from 1957 to 1958 and as chairman from 1959 to 1968.

It was the death of Bowman Sr., though, that set in motion the events that would land Winston-Salem a medical school.



Architect's rendering of proposed Bowman Gray School of Medicine, 1940

## Origins of relocation

Despite the male-centric leadership common of that era, Lyons Gray credits a woman he knew as “Aunt Polly” with steering the generosity of his grandfather.

“When Bowman Gray Sr. was alive, his first cousin, Alice Shelton Gray, was a trained nurse and had worked during the first World War ... and kept pushing Bowman Sr. to institute medical help and aid for the workers at the Reynolds Tobacco Company.

“And through her efforts ... they created an internal medical program at the Reynolds Tobacco Company, the first of its kind of any major manufacturer, at least at that time, anywhere in the Southeast.”

In his will, Bowman Sr. left a trust fund with a value of \$750,000 and one stipulation: the money had to be used to help a charitable endeavor in Winston-Salem.

The vague wording of the stipulation became the subject of discussion among the people Bowman Sr. entrusted to make the spending decision—his brother James, his wife and his sons.

“They sat and thought and believed that for the future of the community, as well as for the manufacturing operations here, a medical school would be the best way to employ those funds that Bowman Gray Sr. had left in his will,” Lyons Gray recounts.

“The issue was how to do this, because there was no medical school here. And also with the belief that the medical school, if here, would have to stay on top of the emerging issues in the



Governor's commission appointing Coy C. Carpenter to study plans for a new medical school in North Carolina.

field of medicine so that the people who lived in the northwestern part of the state would have access to the finest medical care available.”

Meanwhile, the commission that had been organized to consider whether to establish a four-year state medical school became aware of an unnamed trust in an unnamed city that was willing to donate money to establish a four-year school, provided that it be located in the home city of the donor.

The commission members were unaware that the trust fund to pay for this was from Bowman Sr., who had attended UNC. Nor did they know that James, Gordon and Bowman Jr. were all graduates of Chapel Hill.

But the dean of the UNC medical school flatly objected to consideration of moving the school. Once his stance became clear, Carpenter, who was a member of the commission, asked Mull to assist in getting the fund for Wake Forest’s medical school.

A series of meetings began soon after, culminating on Aug. 3, 1939, when the fund was officially offered to Wake Forest.

In September 1941, a total of 75 students—45 in their first year, and 30 starting their second year—helped inaugurate what Wake Forest College’s trustees decided (the family had not requested or stipulated it) would be called the Bowman Gray School of Medicine.



James A. Gray Sr., Smith Hagaman, Bess Gray Plumly, Governor Melville Broughton, Bowman Gray Jr. Gordon Gray and Coy C. Carpenter gather for Bowman Gray School of Medicine dedication ceremony in 1941.

*“They sat and thought and believed that for the future of the community, as well as for the manufacturing operations here, a medical school would be the best way to employ those funds that Bowman Gray Sr. had left in his will,”*

— Lyons Gray

## Patron family steps up repeatedly

*“We’ll succeed,  
because we will not  
spend money we  
don’t have.”*

— Coy C. Carpenter

**W**ith the nation at war, the early years of the medical school were difficult. The \$750,000 from the Bowman Gray Trust was substantially less than the \$10 million believed needed to build and operate a medical school at the time.

Carpenter, who moved with the school to Winston-Salem and who would remain as dean until 1963, had an oft-quoted reply when asked by Gordon Gray if it was possible to establish a school with such a small budget.

*“We’ll succeed, because we will not spend money we don’t have.”*

The Gray family members, who together were an advisory group to Carpenter, also stepped up to fill the gap.

Bowman Jr. and Gordon both returned from military duty in 1946 and established trusts of \$125,000 each to initiate the departments of neuropsychiatry and preventive medicine.

Bowman Sr.’s widow, Nathalie, had remarried, and gave several parcels of land and buildings at the Graylyn Estate to the medical school, which were used over the years as a neuropsychiatric hospital and for geriatric patients as Amos Cottage. The latter was later converted in the late ‘50s to serve special needs children. Amos Cottage remains in business today at a different location.

The biggest gift, however, came in 1947, when James A. Gray decided to set up a \$1.7 million trust to benefit 11 North Carolina colleges and universities, with Bowman Gray School of Medicine getting the biggest share, \$900,000.



1946 aerial view of Graylyn Estate

James A. "Jim" Gray III, president of Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount, says his grandfather was a humble man who only wanted to honor his older brother.

"He tried to give away as much as he could before his death so that he could honor his brother for this institution and see the good that came from that philanthropy. And that's, I think, an unusual kind of philosophy you don't see much anymore.

"My grandfather really had two great passions other than his church and his family, and that was Carolina football and philanthropy."

The gift from James Gray, who died of a heart attack in 1952 at age 63, helped sustain Bowman Gray School of Medicine. It was used to retire debt on the original loan taken out to build the school and to advance programs.

*“My grandfather really had two great passions other than his church and his family and that was Carolina football and philanthropy.”*

— James A. “Jim” Gray III

The Gray money helped bridge the era when government grants began to become available for research and programs, ones that faculty would take advantage of as Bowman Gray School of Medicine began to grow in prominence as a research institution.

Dr. Robert Cooper, who arrived in 1962 as an oncologist, soon delved into white blood cell research, making inroads in the treatment of people with leukemia.

“You paid your way by getting research grants,” he says. “It was a time of discovery. It was a time when new syndromes were being discovered.”

Likewise, Toole, who established the Stroke Center, says the school built upon the invaluable connections of former faculty. People like Richard Masland, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at Bowman Gray, who became director of the National



Lyons Gray and James A. “Jim” Gray III



Dr. James Toole

Institute of Neurobiological Disorders and Stroke at the National Institutes of Health.

Toole says Masland encouraged him to apply for grants that led to groundbreaking work.

“Strokes were everywhere, all kinds of strokes. No one had treatment. No one had any idea,” he says. “We would give them hope. Nobody had ever done that.”

His book on stroke has been translated into many languages, and he remains proud of the fact that Bowman Gray School of Medicine was one of the first “to take stroke and make it a rehab activity. Down here, with stroke so common and the money flowing in from Washington, it became the place to go to learn about stroke.”

Toole still comes in regularly to Emeritus House. He smiles when sharing the story of his early days at the school.

“Coy Carpenter took me under his wing,” he says. “He said a couple of families in town really run the show. The Grays. The Haneses.

“He told me to carry a couple of packs of cigarettes,” he says, eyes twinkling and patting his shirt pockets. “You don’t have to smoke them.”

## Wake Forest College follows its medical school

**G**ordon Gray, the son of Bowman Sr., is credited with floating the idea, in 1945, of bringing the rest of Wake Forest College over to be reunited with the medical school. He discussed it with Carpenter, and soon enough the proposal was being pitched and supported by William Neal Reynolds, the brother of company founder R.J., as well as Mary Reynolds Babcock, the daughter of R.J., and her husband, Charles.

Just as the Gray family did with the medical school, the Reynolds family drove the effort to build the Reynolda campus for Wake Forest, with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation providing the bulk of the money and the family also donating 300 acres.

For a time it appeared that the School of Medicine, along with N.C. Baptist Hospital, might move to the Graylyn Estate as part of the vision of a new university and adjacent hospital and medical school.

In his book about the school, Carpenter describes the difficulties.

“Between the time of the 1946 decision to move Wake Forest College to Winston-Salem and 1956 when it was moved, the medical school and hospital faced tremendous problems of raising funds for expansion and, at the same time, avoiding competition with the parent institution.

“In spite of these difficulties, some expansion was provided to include additions to both the hospital and medical school. The expansion [that was] provided, however, continued to lag behind the needs for teaching, research and patient care.

It was not until the beginning of the \$30 million expansion program in 1963 that adequate facilities for the rapidly growing and developing medical center could be visualized."

One of the first expansions, completed in 1959, was to the original medical school building. It was renamed in memory of James Gray.

## Wake Forest and Drive meets Goal \$66,121

September, 1952,  
Opening Planned

Wake Forest College campaign in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County exceeded its \$1,500,000 goal by \$66,121, it was reported last night at the final meeting of campaign leaders and workers. Nearly 300 workers also attended. O. M. Mull of Shelby, chairman of the Wake Forest College Board of trustees and chairman of the school's building and grounds committee, announced that plans for the opening of the new building here in September, 1952. Mull said final blueprints have been drawn up immediately after the completion of the college at Reynolds will be started in 1950, and he hopes to start Wake Forest "new life" with the beginning of the 1952-53 school year. Mull's reports showed that \$165,000 had been raised since last year, sending the grand total to \$66,121.

DIVISION and CHAIRMAN	SUBSCRIPTIONS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED	REPORTING TODAY	TOTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO DATE
SPECIAL GIFTS-INDIVIDUALS	537835	70115	607950
CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE	3865	75935	80800
RETIRED COMMERCIAL NATIONAL	15	7590	60205
GRC CORPORATION	25	8270	67075
		2555	16300
		1702	5791
		65158	154121

OVER THE TOP—Wake Forest College Campaign Chairman Irving Carlyle (extreme right) points to the total of \$1,566,121 raised in the drive that ended last night. Looking on are (left to right): P. Huber Hanes, individual special gifts chairman; James A. Gray, vice-chairman of the campaign in charge of special gifts, and W. N. Reynolds, retired official of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.

Tote board shows results of 1948 campaign that raised \$1.5 million to move Wake Forest College to Winston-Salem

“In spite of these difficulties, some expansion was provided to include additions to both the hospital and medical school.”

— Coy C. Carpenter



On October 15, 1951, Harry S. Truman officially broke ground for Wake Forest College's move to Winston-Salem

## Call her Dr. Gray

**A**lthough the many members of the Gray family have gone on to other places and notable achievements, one person bearing the Gray name graduated from what had by then become Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

When she was a high school junior in Massachusetts, Dr. Carter Gray recalls, she went with the family to Disney World for Thanksgiving.

“We were in line for a ride, I think it was Epcot, and there was a man in a sweatshirt and it was the one that says ‘Bowman Gray School of Medicine.’ And I remember being with my brother and my sister and we were just giggling that how funny is this ... And my dad said ‘yeah, we’re kind of related to them.’ Did not make a big deal at all. And that was the first I ever heard of it.”

After visiting a cousin attending Wake Forest University, she decided to move south for her undergraduate studies, and while at Wake was pre-med, intending to follow through on the dream she’d had since seventh grade to become a doctor.

Her parents were then living in New York, and she applied to medical schools in that state, with the exception being Wake Forest.

“I remember being kind of nervous about applying, worrying about whether I would be treated the same.”

She was admitted and became part of the medical school’s Class of ‘99. Ironically, it was while she was enrolled at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, in 1997, that the decision was made

to change the school's name to Wake Forest University School of Medicine. The medical school campus became known as the Bowman Gray campus, distinguishing it from the Reynolda campus of Wake Forest University.

"I found out about it like everybody else did, reading it in the newspaper. Technically, I didn't graduate from Bowman Gray. I graduated from Wake Forest University School of Medicine."

The name change caused some hard feelings for Gray family members ("It was pretty bad," Carter Gray acknowledges), but she has a good outlook on things, including the March 2011 name change to Wake Forest School of Medicine.

"Sometimes you have to understand your past to move forward ... People will still revere it regardless of what its name is."

As for the Gray name and its connection with the medical school, Carter Gray got a surprise upon graduation.

Her grandfather, James A. Gray Jr., told her that her graduation gift was a medical school scholarship in her honor.

"Every year I get a letter from a student who gets money, and it's not a lot of money, but it's something that helps a little bit. And that's his legacy that lives on."

Through the 2010-11 academic year, the Lindsay Carter Gray, MD Scholarship Fund had given out nearly \$44,000 to three students in its first 13 years.

Carter Gray, who lives in Durham, says the idea of giving back is one she hopes to pass on to her two boys, just as it was passed along to her.



Dr. Carter Gray

"I would like for them to love their community and give back to their communities," she says. "And it doesn't have to be a big project. It can be working in a soup kitchen. Volunteering. Tutoring. It could be anything. Just volunteering in your community is so important, and that's what keeps it alive."

*"Just volunteering in your community is so important, and that's what keeps it alive."*

— Carter Gray



COMMENCEMENT

The Botoman Gray School  
of Medicine  
of  
Wake Forest College

Winston-Salem, N. C.

JUNE 10-11, 1951

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*Tenth Anniversary*

Commencement program, 1951

## Recognition for family

During commencement in 1951, the 10-year anniversary of the medical school's move to Winston-Salem, the school paid tribute to the Gray family: Bowman Sr. and James, Bowman Jr. and Gordon.

The program from that day, found in the Dorothy Carpenter Medical Archives in the basement of the Gray Building, speaks to the legacy of the family whose name continues not just through the Lindsay Carter Gray, MD Scholarship Fund, but in the core of what today is Wake Forest School of Medicine.

“Each of these members of the Gray family, whose interest and vision have made the Bowman Gray School of Medicine possible, exemplified benevolence in its truest sense. Their faith in the potentialities of rising generations is a challenge to the 383 young men and women who have gone out of the school to further the great profession of medicine in this and in other states—and to all those who come after them.”

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- L. Carter Gray, interviewed by telephone on Aug. 31, 2011

## **Credits**

Julie James, systems librarian, Coy C. Carpenter Library, Wake Forest School of Medicine

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