

Ervin home preservation efforts stopped

By BILL POTEAT
Managing Editor

The effort to preserve the home of the late Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. and his wife, Margaret, as a public museum and library has ended and the house will instead continue to be used by the Ervin family.

Superior Court Judge Claude S. Sitton of Morganton, who had spearheaded the effort to preserve the home, said Thursday the Ervin family has asked him to stop the effort because not enough money had been raised and a family member wanted to use the home.

In the summer of 1987, when a non-profit corporation was formed to raise funds for the preservation of the Lenoir Street home, Sitton estimated that at least \$35,000 would need to be raised to prepare the home for opening to the public.

Although the Ervin family had agreed to donate the home to the corporation, called the Sam J. Ervin Memorial Home Inc., the funds were needed to install a burglar alarm system,

to purchase book and display cases and to buy tables, folding chairs and other needed items.

The estimated cost of getting the house ready for opening did not include the on-going expense of maintaining the home or paying a staff person to oversee the home's operation.

Despite fund-raising efforts by Sitton and other members of the corporation, only about \$15,000 had been pledged to the preservation effort when the Ervin family asked that it be discontinued.

"No real prospects seem to exist for collecting the very considerable monies necessary to staff and maintain the home," said Judge Sam J. Ervin III in a letter to Sitton this week.

"We are desirous," Ervin stated, "after several years, of settling the future of the house. A family member is interested in living there. Therefore we ask that the project be concluded."

Sitton told The News Herald that he is disappointed the preservation effort was not successful, but added, "I take the blame. We simply didn't get enough money fast enough."

Sitton said he now hopes the library of the Ervin home can be replicated in the new Phifer

Learning Resource Center on the campus of Western Piedmont Community College.

College officials had talked of the possibility of housing Ervin's collection of books, political cartoons and other mementos of the late senator's Washington years in the Phifer Learning Resource Center.

Asked about that possibility Thursday afternoon, WPCC President Jim Richardson said he preferred not to comment until discussing the matter with members of the Ervin family.

Richardson said he had learned of the discontinuation of the memorial home efforts Thursday morning and that it would be impossible to pursue the matter until Judge Ervin returns from a trip to Europe.

Sitton, who is a member of the board of trustees at the college, said he hopes the other trustees will "see fit to accept the proposal of recreating Sen. Ervin's library in the Phifer Center."

Sitton also thanked all those who worked for

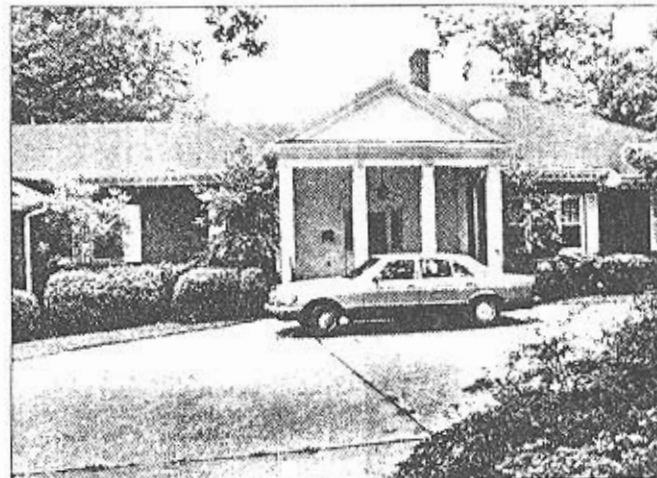


Photo by Mark Hannan

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The home of the late Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr.

Ervin home preservation effort halted

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the home preservation effort, particularly those who donated money to the cause.

Sitton added that he hopes all those who contributed money to the effort will now allow those funds to be used in replicating the Ervin library on the Western Piedmont campus.

Persons who do not wish to see their contributions used for that effort will have the money refunded, Sitton said, noting that only about \$500 of the money raised had been spent.

Ervin, who served in the U.S. Senate for nearly 20 years and was most famous for his chairing of the Watergate Committee, will be the subject of a new PBS documentary in October entitled, "Senator Sam."