Cherry Great, Great Granddaughter

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Henry Hardin Cherry, the founding president of Western Kentucky University, is immortalized in the statue that looks out over Bowling Green.

That statue has a special meaning for a WKU freshmen this semester. Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

Maggie McGowan is one of nearly 35-hundred freshmen at WKU. But what sets her apart is the strong family ties she has at both the top and the bottom of the hill.

Honors Freshman Maggie McGowan from Collierville Tennessee didn’t think she would wind up at WKU.

 “I never imagined myself here especially living in Memphis, all my friends go to UT and Mississippi State and then I visited and really liked it.”

It didn’t hurt that she used to live here a long time ago.

 “Also I knew the town cause I lived here when I was little.”

But what really makes it special is her family’s connection to the University.

 “I just always remember looking at the statue and being like I’m related to him.”

McGowan’s great, great grandfather is Henry Hardin Cherry, the man who’se bold vision turned the Southern Normal School into Western Kentucky University in 1906.

 “I just know he was really dedicated to what he believed in and really took just a leap of faith in starting this whole university.”

The Cherry statue, which was unveiled in 1937, is not McGowan’s only family link.

 “I walk by that tower every day and I’m with my friends and they’ll be like hey look, that’s your grandpa.”

Brigadier General Dan Cherry’s likeness was etched into the Guthrie Bell Tower in 2005 for his service in Vietnam.

 “He doesn’t seem like to me, someone who would have their face on a tower, he’s just my grandpa.”

It was Dan Cherry who made sure his grandchildren knew about the gutsy leadership of their iconic ancestor.

 “He’s always, even since I was a little kid, told me who he was and he would take me to the statue when I was little so I’ve always known about Western and my grandpa.”

Maggie says she feels like she’s come full circle having lived here as a young child and now attending college in Bowling Green.

She is studying marketing and hopes to stay in the area after she graduates.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.