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Humane Society: The Winding Road Proves the Best Path for a Recent Grad's Work in International Development

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THE IDEALISTIC REALIST

"There isn't any one solution or one right way to solve big hairy things like poverty," says Rabarison. "There are myriad solutions all floating in a complex system."

Humane Society

The winding road proves the best path for a recent grad's work in international development.

BY ANDREW HUANG '11

What I've been telling people lately is that I know what it's like to live in a house without a toilet or running water. I also know what it's like to sit in a college classroom to discuss why some communities—like

where I am from—might not have running water," says **Karolle Rabarison '10** as she describes how she found herself making a career out of international development.

Rabarison is currently serving as membership coordinator for the Alliance for Affordable

Internet, an initiative of the Web Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes affordable and equal access to the Internet as a key tool in addressing issues like health care, poverty, hunger, and education.

"Traditional development goals tend to focus more on needs like food and health and education, but information and communications technology can be a driving force to achieve all those goals," says Rabarison. "There are so many benefits to having access to the Internet, to having access to information, to being connected: economic opportunities, access to educational content, civic engagement. The recent Myanmar elections are a good example; mapping for disaster and crisis response as with Ebola, fighting corruption,

financial inclusion..." she inventories.

In spite of Rabarison's obvious passion for her current work, she didn't anticipate jumping straight to policy-level advocacy at the Web Foundation. Since graduating from Furman, Rabarison has operated at multiple levels of international development. She spent two years in India working with individuals and communities on the ground to address local needs in education, social entrepreneurship, agriculture, and rural development. While in India, she also cofounded Badal ja!, a digital platform for sharing stories to combat gender and social inequality. "I was, am, and always will be interested in a great many things, so no, I definitely didn't arrive at

Furman knowing exactly what I wanted to do," she says. But her journey makes a powerful case for the type of education Rabarison wanted when coming to Furman: Not knowing what she wanted to do gave her the freedom to do anything.

From an immersion experience in China before her freshman year, Rabarison gained an important initial perspective. At Furman, she was drawn to economics as an intellectual interest, which ended up being her major, but she also dived headfirst into the Furman University Student Activities Board—where she served as the treasurer, a committee chair for off-campus events, and the originator for Last Day of Class (LDOC) celebrations—as well as the Shucker Leadership Institute, where she worked on leadership skills with seventh graders from Greenville's Sterling School.

Over her four years, Rabarison quickly realized that directly impacting people was

more gratifying than pursuing knowledge for its own sake. "I am still most excited by opportunities to work with people. Meeting them where they are and connecting them to the resources they need to reach their full potential."

Rabarison is realistic about the challenges that she—and others—face. "There isn't any one solution or one right way to solve big hairy things like poverty," she says. "There are a bunch of complex problems and myriad solutions all floating in a complex system."

Yet, there is something reassuring about the fact that Rabarison is one such person tackling those issues. "The Furman programs I participated in were very much about immersion and learning," says Rabarison. "We embarked as students, as learners, not as people looking to be heroes." Because in the end, it's not about saving the world. It's about giving the world the means to help itself. ●

From the Vault



Message in a Bottle

What you may not have known, remembered, or thought possible at Furman

In 1999, **Cherrydale**, the splendid Greek revival home of James Clement Furman, the university's first president, was moved from its footing at the base of Paris and Piney mountains to campus. Over two days, Expert Movers of Virginia used their engineering skills to hoist the 4,960-square-foot building from its foundation and transport it three miles along Poinsett Highway to its present location at the highest point of the Furman campus. Just prior to the transplanting, a champagne bottle was reportedly placed on the balustrade where it remained, unremoved and unbroken, until the house resettled at the university, testifying to the solid structure of both the house and the university it has come to symbolize. This may also explain why so many alumni say their marriage vows at Cherrydale.



THEN

Reflections on Furman as It Was

It was with a lot excitement and fear that I entered Furman that September 1960. It was a new world for me, even though when I was four my dad took a job as Furman's assistant football coach, baseball coach, and basketball coach. (Not to mention my being a crown bearer for Mayday for the ladies, a character on many Homecoming floats, and over the years a water boy and batboy.) But that first week as a student, the administration scared us when they told us to "look to your right and left" because those you see won't be here in four years.

The magnificent trees of today were mere twigs back then. It was a segregated campus. The women lived downtown and came out by bus to selected classes that first year. We men had closed study (meaning we had to be in our rooms every night) and Saturday classes (some at 8 a.m.). We had to wear those darn beanies everywhere. We were rebellious at times and drove Dr. Bonner to distraction by refusing to wear socks to class.

We were insulated on that "new campus" as television was not yet the fashion, but the Cuban missile crisis scared the devil out of us, and the death of President Kennedy our senior year was unbelievable in our sheltered environment.

Before we knew it—between the all-night bull sessions in the dorms, studies, fraternity parties, and sports—four years passed rapidly. When I graduated from Furman, there was no war. It blew in like a tornado in the summer of 1965. I was fortunate that I had taken ROTC, and with my commission in the infantry, I knew

I would spend the next few years "playing army" in the safety of the States. But our comfortable assumption about the easy Army years became the nightmare of going to war in Vietnam. On November 17, 1965, I was caught in the middle of the biggest ambush fight of the 10-year war. Our unit received more Purple Hearts for wounds on that day than any in the war. We had 155 men killed and 134 wounded, including myself.

I started writing the story of those first five months in the Seventh Cavalry after years of research and collecting interviews from others I served with. The Seventh Cavalry was General Custer's outfit that was wiped out near a river in 1876. Nearly 100 years later, our same outfit nearly got wiped out near a river. This story was denied for years by the Army. It needed to be told. As I wrote, I kept finding the ghosts of Custer, and they became intermingled with our "ghosts of the green grass."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bud Alley '64 graduated with a bachelor of science degree in biology. He received numerous awards for his service, including the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. Alley holds an MBA from Regent's University and a master's degree in public history from Middle Tennessee State University. Last July, he published his memoir, *The Ghosts of the Green Grass*.