

9-1-2017

In the Kitchen at White Oaks

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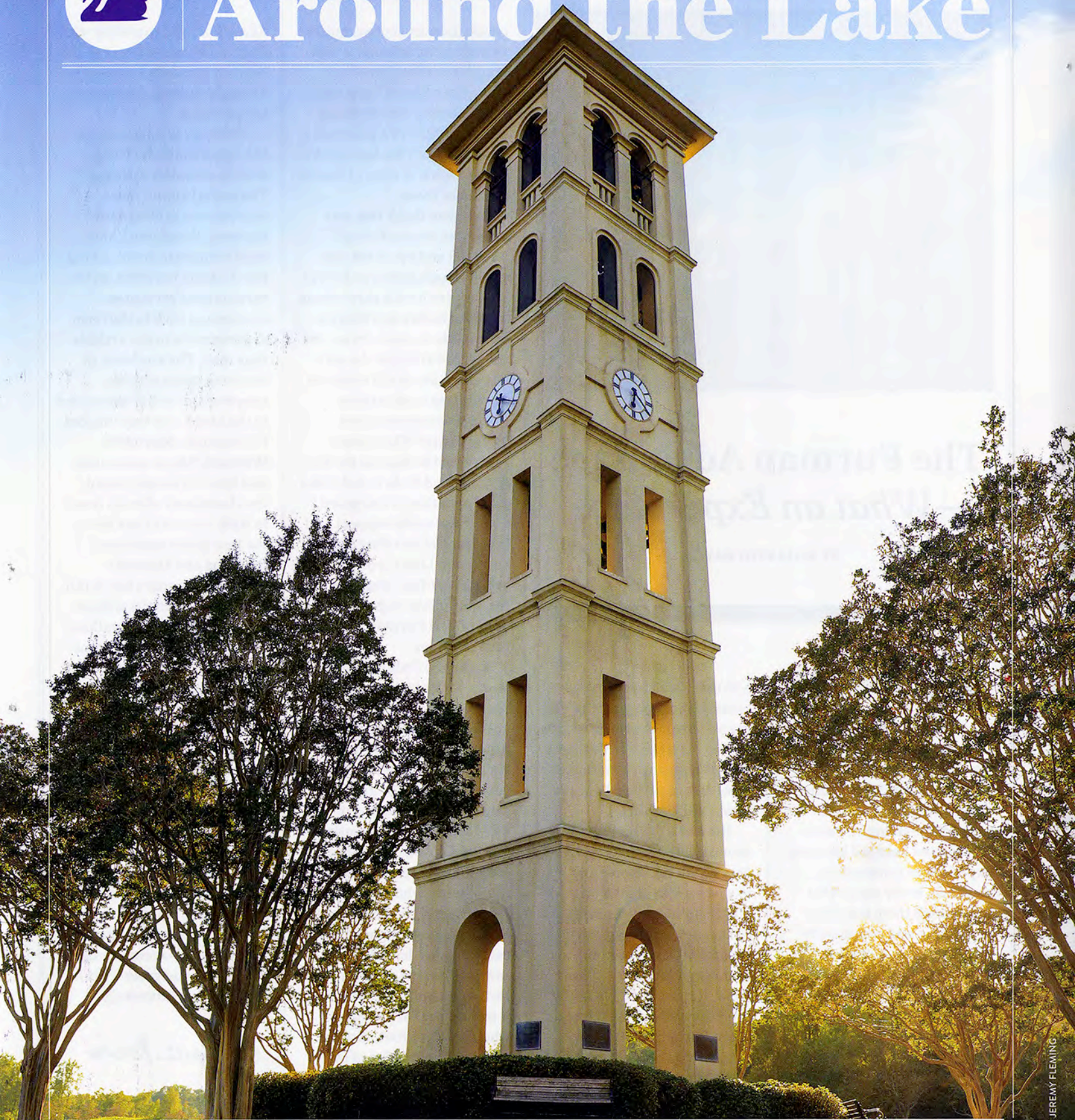
Recommended Citation

Roberts, John (2017) "In the Kitchen at White Oaks," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 60 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol60/iss2/6>

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Around the Lake





Furman First Gentleman Charles Davis got a taste for the kitchen at an early age when his mother, Shirley, took a full-time job as an antique store office manager in tiny Farmville, North Carolina.

After Charles arrived home from school, Mrs. Davis would telephone to dictate the dinner for the evening and ask her son to make late-afternoon preparations. Oftentimes, the tasks were simple: remove something from the freezer or chop vegetables.

As Charles grew older, he began preparing simple dishes like pasta and chili. Eventually he took on the role as the Davis family dessert-maker.

“Over time, I sort of developed an interest in it. I just grew to enjoy it and was good at it,” says Davis. “So, here we are.”

“Here” is the publication of Davis’ cookbook, *In the Kitchen at White Oaks*.

While Davis can prepare a tasty beef bourguignon and cheesy potato casserole, he’ll tell you that his culinary skills are more akin to Chef Boyardee than Chef Tell. The work also reflects his interest in White Oaks—the president’s home—and the people who have lived there. It includes a heaping of the home’s history and about the first ladies who came before.

White Oaks original owners, construction magnate and industrialist Charles Daniel and his wife, Homozel, oversaw every detail of the



In the Kitchen at White Oaks

First gentleman’s part-history, part-recipe book serves up a celebration of the president’s home and those who lived there.

BY JOHN ROBERTS

home’s construction in the late 1950s. Charles Daniel met with architects from Atlanta, imported Douglas Firs from California for the framing, approved intricate wood carvings and worked hand-in-glove with some of his top construction workers.

Once completed, the home was tastefully adorned with celebrated works of art, antiques, and other home décor selected by Homozel Daniel. Charles Daniel lived at White Oaks until his death in 1964. In 1992, the 9,750-square-foot home was included in a

\$21.4 million gift that was bequeathed to Furman by Homozel.

Since that time, five Furman presidents and their families have lived there. *In the Kitchen at White Oaks* includes contributed recipes from the families of John Plyler (1939–1964), Gordon Blackwell (1965–1976), John Johns (1976–1994), David Shi (1994–2010), Carl Kohrt (2013–14) and, of course, Elizabeth Davis.

In the Kitchen at White Oaks is part-recipe, part-history book that celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Daniel bequest while giving a respectful nod to the former Furman first ladies. While Charles Davis collected and authored the book’s contents, the cookbook was edited and designed by Furman’s University Communications office.

The notion for the book’s creation was hatched about three years ago. As Davis settled into his role as Furman’s first gentleman, he began preparing lunch and hosting the spouses and partners of university trustees at his home during the board’s meetings three times a year.

“After the second luncheon, some attendees began asking for copies of my recipes, and then someone suggested that I compile a cookbook,” says Davis. “At first, I didn’t give the idea much thought. But when the requests continued, I thought maybe it warranted additional consideration.” ●

In the Kitchen at White Oaks will be available for purchase at Homecoming. The book may also be purchased by visiting furman.bncollege.com.