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Next: Reflection on the Importance of Furman Going Forward

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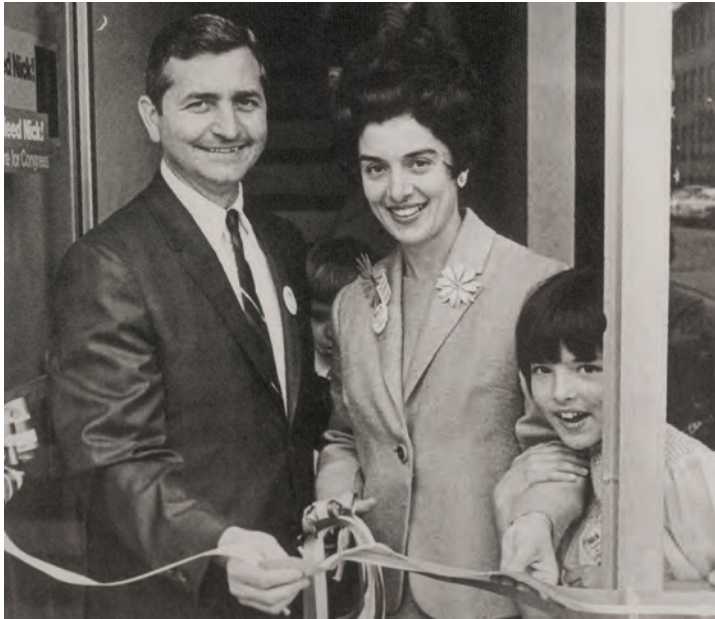
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UP AND COMING

Nick Theodore with his family at the start of his political career in South Carolina.

position to raise financial resources for the campaign. However, in the final analysis, I would still have been the same Nick Theodore serving with the same ideas, and so the only reason for [the switch] would have been selfish.

When you look at the Democrat and Republican parties over your career, do you think they've changed?

N.T.: I think they have changed a great deal. I think about people like Tip O'Neill and Newt Gingrich, and how Clinton brought together different people. Unless we can break down some of these barriers, we are not going to get the greatest good for the greatest number.

Some people would say that it's hard to make good choices if we don't have the best people running.

N.T.: Better candidates must be assured that the electorate

is going to give them a fair shot and not have partisan politics be the ultimate rule the voters depend on.

So, are we getting the politicians we deserve?

N.T.: We live in the greatest free country in the history of the world and we should take that responsibility as a citizen very seriously. It's obvious it should not be a half-hearted vote. It should be a vote that analyzes the candidate, not one that follows a team or party. [Candidates] should all be placed on an evaluating scale and their pasts, present, and potential should be looked at. Too often, voters do "blind voting," where they vote straight tickets.

If you could pass one reform by fiat, what would it be?

N.T.: I would probably want to develop a bona fide system of term limitations. In political, corporate, or any phase of life,



NEXT

Reflection on the Importance of Furman Going Forward

Historians spend their time looking back at the past, not forward into the future. Yet a recent, ongoing project of mine has pushed me to see opportunities for our *alma mater's* future in Furman's past.

For the last year, I have been the co-chair of a committee on campus that has planned a commemoration of desegregation at Furman. This milestone historical event—**Joseph Allen Vaughn's** enrollment as our first black student—occurred 50 years ago in January 1965. The story of desegregation at Furman in the 1950s and 60s contains some uplifting elements and instances of Furman folks showing courage and a passion for justice. Conversely, it is not a proud episode for the university's leadership overall. Furman as an institution stood firmly within the wider culture of the white South that valued segregation and white supremacy. Vaughn's admission was more a result of federal pressure from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than a commitment to racial justice by the university.

My hope is that Furman's yearlong commemoration might serve as a springboard for a comprehensive examination of

racial issues on campus. Most of all, I hope that a study on race and diversity at Furman today will produce concrete programs and changes tomorrow that would make Furman a clearer reflection of our community and state in terms of race and social class. After all, insight into past injustice compels us to confront the legacies of those injustices.

Furman is due credit as an institution willing to look unblinkingly at its past. I think the real measure of our efforts as a university, however, will be whether a better understanding of our institution's past might be used constructively to address issues that still haunt us from the earlier period.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Steve O'Neill '82 is a professor in Furman's history department. He is a native of Charleston and received his PhD from the University of Virginia. He studies the history of the South and, in particular, the Civil Rights movement in South Carolina. He is also interested in public memory, which is how ordinary people—non-scholars—make sense of the past.