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From the Vault: May Days

Julia Cowart
Furman University

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“It’s unfortunately true that, in politics or personal living, sometimes when you’re too comfortable, complacency has a tendency to arrive.”

power has a tendency—when allowed to stay in office—to become too self-promoting.

What about nationally—what do you think is the most critical issue?

N.T.: Strict partisanship. If it’s proposed by one person or one party, then basically it is going to be opposed by the other parties. Whether it’s health care or labor relations or social circumstances, no one person and no one party is always right.

A lot of states have certain political reputations: Florida, New Hampshire, Ohio. How would you describe South Carolina’s?

N.T.: I think it has been on a rollercoaster. We’ve had a lost trust problem: 17 individuals prosecuted and only one acquitted for bribery, a state treasurer who resigned from office because of possession and distribution of drugs. A lieutenant governor who resigned shortly after taking office for ethics violations; the commissioner of agriculture,

who was placed in a penitentiary for, of all things, the promotion of cockfighting. And in spite of our progress in some areas, I learn too often how low our lawmakers hold priorities for children. In a report by the National Center on Child Homelessness that ranks states in child homelessness, South Carolina is 36th.

Do you have a political role model?

N.T.: Dick Riley ’54 would be a person who understands government better than anyone else I’ve served with. On the international level, I’ve always admired FDR and Winston Churchill.

What was your proudest political moment?

N.T.: Having proposed and passed the Education Finance

Act. And some of my rulings in the Senate, which turned around the so-called “bobtail” appropriation of funds—commingling funds, skirting the law by pushing funds into different areas—which were unconstitutional in my judgment.

A journalist recently described you as someone who “took his wins with humility and his losses with dignity.” That said a lot about you but it might also say a lot about what is missing today.

N.T.: I certainly appreciated that. The constituency in our state and nation deserves impartial and unselfish representation. We must continue to strive for that ultimate goal that recognizes the government of the self-governed is the finest work of the government. **F**

From the Vault



May Days

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

BY JULIA COWART

May Day celebrations and crowning a May queen began in Greenville

as early as 1834 with the Greenville Female Academy. May Day traditions continued after the academy closed in 1854 and the South Carolina Baptist Convention chartered the Greenville Baptist Female College (later Greenville Woman’s College [GWC]). May Day celebrations at GWC in the 20th century were often based on a theme and often included a play. The earliest photograph Furman has of a May Day queen at GWC is from 1919. The one at left is from the 1930s.

The May queen was elected by female students on the basis of popularity and leadership, in addition to beauty. After the merger with Furman in 1938, male students were also allowed to vote for the May queen. The May Day celebrations stopped in the 1960s.