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Endowed Professorships: Bing Vick and Hugh Floyd '84

Furman University

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Endowed Professorships Bing Vick and Hugh Floyd '84

Ending on a high note

To understand why a group of singers would get together and permanently endow a professorship, you have to understand what kind of person inspires that sort of loyalty. So it was with no small curiosity that we called Bing Vick, Ph.D., to discuss his illustrious and enduring career.



Bing Vick

Give me a quick recap of the last 40 years.

(Laughing) Well, I came to Furman in 1970 fresh out of grad school. I took over from DuPre Rhame '24 who had started the Furman Singers in 1946. I had tons of enthusiasm and energy and I aspired to take this group to the next level.

How did you do that?

By holding auditions, by being particular, and by demanding experience and ability. This really paid off. We became a nationally recognized (touring) collegiate choir. And our tours throughout the Southeast connected us to alumni, which connected us back to Furman. It was a win-win.

And then.

We started touring in Europe every other summer for a 10-day concert tour. Then in 1979, we held the first annual singers reunion—DuPre was still alive—so he got to meet my singers, I got to meet his, and they got to meet each other. It was a terrific experience. The last reunion before I retired we had 350 singers return.

It must have been hard to retire.

Yes. Furman Singers was really a central part of my life. My wife, Judy, and I were overwhelmed when they established an endowed professorship in our names. To my knowledge, there are no other programs in the country where the alumni have gotten together to do this. So, no, it wasn't easy for me to leave, but I felt like we needed some new enthusiasm on board. And with an endowed professorship it would be easier to attract and retain the highest caliber musician to take over.

Like Hugh Floyd.

Like Hugh Floyd.

Hugh Floyd

Why would you leave a tenured professorship to come to Furman?

Dr. Vick called and asked me to carry on the Furman Singers legacy. Then Bill Thomas, who was the chair of Furman's Music Department at the time, called me. And I couldn't say no. I loved Oberlin, but the draw to Furman was huge.

Why?

Because an endowed professorship opened a world of opportunity for me and for the Furman Singers. We're able to obtain scores that would normally be difficult to access. We're able to be current with recent choral scholarship. We can attract really terrific talent. I attend conferences, like the National Collegiate Conducting Organization Conference, where I can spend time with my peers learning what appeals to college-age musicians.

What appeals to college-age musicians?

This spring we'll be touring in England. A couple of years ago we were in Vienna. I would say that's very appealing.

To you as well.

Let's just say this, when I went to Salzburg, Mozart's home, for the first time two years ago, I really understood what he was saying in his letters. The feeling of oppression that he conveyed, weighed on me as well. Not that Salzburg wasn't beautiful—it was. But had I been a teenager, anxious to see the world, I would have done anything to leave. As Mozart did. It was life changing for me. And for my students.

Furman seems to provide pivotal experiences.

Furman changed everything for me. It equipped me for conservatory. It provided me discipline. It gave me clarity and a sense of purpose. In large part, those lessons were due to Dr. Vick. Which I am now, hopefully, passing on.



#WhyFurmanMatters

Furman Singers provided an immediate niche for each of us as we entered Furman; it was a place to belong and a place to contribute. For both of us, Singers are where our memories are and where we began friendships that continue to this day. Also for me (Sandra), I learned choral and conducting skills that I have used all my professional life as a church musician. For both of us, singing became

a lifelong joy, wherever we live and work.

We wanted to honor this professor that we loved as he retired; and we realized that by endowing a permanent chair, we were in effect insuring the future of Furman Singers in perpetuity. Leading this effort was the proverbial "opportunity to give back" to the organization and university that we love.

— SANDRA '72 AND TY TALTON '72



Professor Emeritus Bing Vick, left, with the Furman Singers.

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number of new professorships from campaign, bringing the total to 27

\$20 million

raised for endowed professorships

Furman Singers

Since 1946, Furman Singers has lifted its collective voice under the leadership of founder DuPre Rhame, immediate past conductor, and professor Bing Vick, Ph.D., and current conductor Hugh Floyd, '84, DMA. Singers is open to majors and non-music majors, who face a rigorous audition process to join the storied ensemble.

There are nearly 1,500 living Furman Singers alumni who raised money to endow the Bingham L. Vick Jr. and Judith S. Vick Professorship of Music, permanently endowing the position of director of the Furman Singers and ensuring the legacy of excellence. Floyd is the first professor to hold this position.

"My wife and I never had children, so these kids were, are, our children. The reunions are really special to us. Our last reunion was the best. We got to see all 350 of them."

— BING VICK

ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS

One of the best opportunities for donors to have a lasting impact rests in supporting Furman's endowment. The *Because Furman Matters* campaign sought to strengthen the endowment as the cornerstone of fundraising efforts in recognition of the enduring investment such gifts provide.

An endowed professorship underwrites the work of a distinguished senior-level professor in the field of the donor's choice. Like other permanently endowed funds,

the professorship will remain with Furman to ensure the teaching and learning experience in perpetuity.

A donation of \$1.5 million will endow a professor at Furman. Over the course of the campaign, three professorships (Asian Studies, Bingham L. Vick Jr. and Judith S. Vick Professorship of Music, and the Dorothy and BH Peace Professorship in Religion) were added to bring the total number of endowed professorships to 27.