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Then: Reflection on the importance of Furman as it was

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President Elizabeth Davis, Greenville Mayor Knox White and M. Judson's co-owner June Wilcox welcome guests to Furman on Main. The new section features Furman memorabilia and books by Furman authors.



THEN

Reflection on the importance of Furman as it was

I come back here again and again.

To this spot, this patch of ground, somewhere between the dining hall and the lake. As a freshman, I'd sit with my bag lunch, partly overwhelmed by schoolwork, partly in desire of it, but mostly wishing I could forever lounge in this spot, feeding the badgering squirrels and beautiful ducks, a swan or two casually swimming into the mix.

Today, black swans join in, and my bike rests against a bench. The sun bounces off the surface of the lake, rippling in iridescent rhythm as I squint into its glare.

I am now old enough to have a measure of perspective on my alma mater, far enough removed to notice the difference and distance between current students and me. They are young, I think, but also advanced. Mature. Confident. I wasn't as sure during my time at Furman, but then again our feelings are probably closer than they appear. With so much in flux – classwork, future path, the shape of my social circle – my anchor was the lake: walking its edges, sitting on its banks, hearing the dong of the bell tower like a meditation. Being near this body of water soothed my mind, an antidote to chaotic feelings. I went there again and again.

Today, the campus continues to evolve: renovations and

new additions and landscape alterations change its form. But, thankfully, the lake remains constant. When it comes into view at the turn-in from the Swamp Rabbit Trail, I stop. After a long pause, I pedal over to the side near the dining hall, dodging students lounging near the PalaDen and families picnicking under the oaks. I wheel over to one of the cement benches near the water, remove my helmet, and sit. Usually this turns to lying supine so that the branches are now in my immediate view, and the low afternoon sun warms my body.

Now, instead of studying for exams, I journal about my life, brainstorm concepts for the publication I edit, and outline presentations I give to current students here. I think about the four important years at this university, and marvel at the fact that they were just the beginning, just the start of my personal journey and my connection to this school that deepens like the water – a place I come back to again and again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Blair Knobel '03 is the editor-in-chief of *Town Magazine*, a monthly publication on the culture of Greenville and beyond.