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Letters

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A DIFFERING OPINION

IN “FAITH, HERITAGE AND FURMAN” in the Fall 2012 magazine, a line states, “As fundamentalist leaders came to power in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979, they started systematically making changes in the denomination’s seminaries, most notably requiring that professors espouse and teach the inerrancy of the Bible.”

The line would suggest that prior to 1979, professors weren’t supposed to believe and teach the inerrancy of the Bible. That just isn’t true. Professors were ALWAYS required to sign a statement saying they believed in and would teach in accordance with “The Baptist Faith and Message.” The first statement of this document has ALWAYS been the inerrancy of scripture.

In 1963 it read, “The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.”

In 1925 it read, “We believe that the Holy Bible was written by man divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for

its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.”

The “fundamentalists” simply began asking that professors who had willingly signed this document as a part of their hiring actually stick to it, and if they would not keep their word — to teach in accordance with what they had previously claimed to believe — then to find employment elsewhere. Saying schools suddenly began requiring faculty to believe in the inerrancy of scripture when the SBC had been doing so all along on paper is like saying that South Carolina suddenly started having a 60 miles per hour speed limit when policemen began to systematically enforce the limit that had been posted all along.

My experience with the Furman religion department was that everyone was welcome to espouse their opinions except inerrantists. I never received full marks on any Bible test in which my explanation differed from my professor’s, no matter how well supported or stated my reasoning was, and no matter how much the question stated “In your opinion . . .” — even if I put the professor’s answer first (as in “This is one opinion: ____ . And here is another I find more compelling: ____.”).

— CHRISTINA THOMPSON SZRAMA ’07
Greenville

CONFESSIONS OF A LAKE HERO



I ENJOYED THE “RUMOR HAS IT” story about campus myths in the fall issue and want to share some of my memories of the days when mere mortals regularly took the plunge, willingly and without health repercussions, in the Furman lake.

During my years at Furman, not only was swimming allowed in the lake, there was a dock across from the cafeteria. I attended summer classes

between my junior and senior years, and I was head lifeguard at the dock. It was a pretty sweet gig. The hardest I worked in that job was when dozens of children from the various camps would come to swim. In fact, in all my years of lifeguarding, the only time I saved someone was the day a child almost drowned after jumping off of that dock. I can still picture his wide, terrified eyes as he looked up at me. He was actually standing on the bottom of the lake. All I did was reach in and pull him out, but, at least with his counselors, that qualified me as a hero for the rest of that day.

It’s hard to believe that the water was that clear, but another of my memories confirms it. Charlotte Thomas of Charleston once lost her mother’s Furman ring in the lake when it fell off her hand as she stood on the dock and pointed at something. She was extraordinarily upset when she showed up at my dorm room, but she was composed enough to blurt out that she needed to borrow my swimming goggles. I went down to the lake with her. It was really cold that day, but I jumped in and, by some act of providence, found the ring on the bottom of the lake the first time

I looked. It was wonderful to see Charlotte so happy, and it became the second time I was dubbed a lake hero.

Maybe one day the lake will be restored to the point that Furman students and others can swim there again.

— LEE HUGHES ’86
Savannah, Ga.

TRIATHLON MEMORY

NICE ARTICLE about Furman rumors in the fall magazine. Just a note about the water in the lake: I attended Furman from 1986–90. We jumped off the dock into the water once in a while. More interestingly, on May 22, 1990, I competed in my first triathlon and we SWAM in the lake for almost one mile (about a 25-minute swim for me), and somehow I finished the race.

The water could not have been that polluted back then (even though the presence of geese poop was obvious). Too bad the lake is unswimmable now because Furman is the perfect venue for triathlon.

— MICHAEL G. SCOTT ’90
Scituate, Mass.

“Rumor Has It” writer Melanie Krone Armstrong ’94 received several similar notes sharing memories of swimming in the lake.