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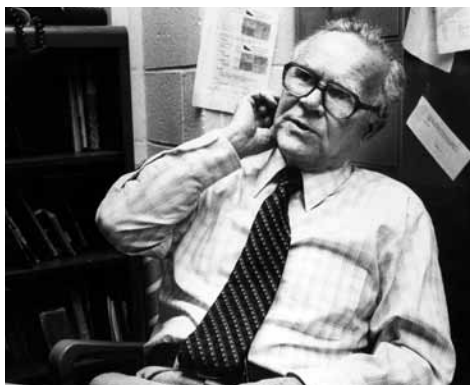
## IN REMEMBRANCE: T.C. SMITH, BENNY REECE

THE SIGN ON T.C. SMITH'S office door read "Shalom, y'all."

To Peggy Haymes '82, this greeting represented "a succinct blend of his warmth and whimsy, acknowledging his knowledge of biblical languages and his Southern roots. It was a perfect greeting and benediction, conveying peace rooted in relationships."

Taylor Clarence Smith, religion professor at Furman from 1966 to 1980, died peacefully November 15 at the age of 96. Four days later, at a memorial service in Greenville, former university chaplain Jim Pitts shared Haymes' story, as well as those of many others who testified to Smith's keen intellect, sense of humor and gracious manner.

Smith held degrees from Louisiana College, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and did additional study at Oxford University, Union Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College. Before coming to Furman he taught at Southern Seminary, the University of Chicago, and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif. He was a Navy chaplain during World War II and retired as a captain after 30 years in the Naval Reserve.



Furman was his last professional stop, but after he retired he maintained an active scholarly life. He was the author of 13 books and had another in progress, about religious themes in Shakespeare.

While Smith never wavered in his scholarly pursuits, Pitts pointed out that his friend didn't exactly embrace modern technology. "He insisted on typing on a standard upright typewriter," Pitts said. "He was not computer savvy, but he was accessible by phone, and I was always giving out his phone number to

people doing research or seeking academic guidance. Just a week before his death I connected him with a person doing research on the march on Selma during the national civil rights struggle." Smith was proud of his participation in the march.

Tony McDade '79 submitted this memory: "Who can forget the first time that you witnessed a T.C. Smith lecture in which he explained obscure allusions, from the Talmud to Shakespeare, while writing furiously across the chalkboard in Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic and occasionally — thank God — English? The sheer enormity of his intellect and the unfathomable depth of his devotion to social justice were indeed inspiration at its finest."

Pitts said he once told a group of young scholars that Smith, who was in the room, was such a fount of information that he was "faster and more accurate than Google." The crowd laughed with appreciation. After they left, Smith turned to Pitts and asked, "Who is this Google? Are you talking about Barney Google?"

A brilliant mind. A beacon of integrity. A model of wit and wisdom, courage and compassion. Such are the gifts T.C. Smith leaves his family, students and colleagues.

WHEN BENNY REECE retired in 1990 after 29 years as a Furman classics professor, the story was told that he preferred to teach upper-level classes in what was then the library's Bradshaw Room. He felt the atmosphere — classic books, leather-bound chairs, oak tables — was more conducive to the study of Latin than the sterile Furman Hall classrooms.

In this refined setting, Reece's students would often sit transfixed as he effortlessly and eloquently read the ancient texts from his own translations.

Reece, who died December 29 in Bay Minette, Ala., at the age of 81, was a graduate of Duke University, where he was an accomplished athlete (baseball and track). After earning his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina, he spent a year as a Fulbright Fellow in Germany and then taught at Mercer University before



coming to Furman in 1961. As department chair for many years, he helped build and expand the classics program.

Rex Crews '81, who teaches classics at UNC, wrote of his gratitude to Reece "for his unwavering support and confidence in me."

During his student days, Crews said, few students majored in classics, so many of his courses with Reece involved one-on-one instruction. "Dr. Reece's deportment, even in these situations, was quite formal," he said. "He always addressed me as Mr. Crews.

"When teaching, he wore a suit and tie and always displayed in his character what the Romans called *dignitas* and *gravitas*. A man of few words but by no means shy or retiring, he quietly but firmly demanded our best work at all times. In keeping with his dignity (and to our amusement), during class translation

periods, anything that was risqué was read aloud only in Latin!"

Crews added that "one of the things I found most interesting about Dr. Reece was his personality outside the classroom. He was a passionate collector of antiques and attended area flea markets and estate sales to add to his amazing collection. On these occasions, he dressed in a blue jean jacket and cowboy hat — a look quite at odds with his classroom persona, but one I found delightful."

Reece's interests extended to other areas, among them gun collecting, short-wave radio, and jazz. He also collected the English and American first editions of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's books, and he even spent a sabbatical studying the works of Charles Dickens.

In 1989 he published a book, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood Solved*, in which he applied his knowledge of mythology to suggest a solution to Dickens' final, unfinished work.

Clearly, Benny Reece was a man of gentility and refinement.

— STORIES BY JIM STEWART