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In remembrance: T.C. Smith, Benny Reece

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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 erudition, acknowledging his knowledge of biblical languages and his Southern roots. It was a perfect greeting and benediction to open and conclude classes.”

Taylor Clarence Smith, religion professor at Furman from 1965 to 1990, died peacefully November 15 at his Greenville home, 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 stern intellect, sense of humor and gracious manner.

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

Smith was a man of many interests, among them gun collecting, short-wave radio, and jazz. He dressed in a blue jean jacket and cowboy hat — he also wore a cowboy hat — to add to his amazing collection. On these occasions, he would often sit trans- cendental to suggest a solution to Dickens’ work and his accuracy for the Greenville News.

In 1990 after 29 years as a Furman classics professor, the story was that he preferred to teach upper- middle classes in what was then the Irmo Baptist Church. He left the atmosphere — classic books, teaching the classics program. He was also a video producer and knew a number of students who were indeed inspiration at its best. “It was a perfect greeting and benediction to open and conclude classes,” Haymes said. When Smith turned to Pitts and asked, “Who is this Groucho? Are you talking about Barney Google?”

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

When Benny Reece retired in 1989 after 29 years as a Furman classics professor, the story was that he preferred to teach upper-middle classes in what was then the Irmo Baptist Church. He left the atmosphere — classic books, teaching the classics program. He was also a video producer and knew a number of students who were indeed inspiration at its best. “It was a perfect greeting and benediction to open and conclude classes,” Haymes said. When Smith turned to Pitts and asked, “Who is this Groucho? Are you talking about Barney Google?”

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