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# One mentor's influence: Gerda McCahan

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## One mentor's influence: Gerda McCahan

*This is one in a series of articles in which alumni describe a favorite Furman mentor. To learn about the Furman Standard, a program to honor influential mentors, contact [susan.brady@furman.edu](mailto:susan.brady@furman.edu).*

**IT WAS THE SPRING OF 1968.** I wasn't sure I would ever get out of Furman. My grades were OK, but not exceptional.

An English major, I had been persuaded to take a course taught by psychology professor Gerda McCahan. I was challenged greatly by this course in "Psychology of Exceptional Children and Youth," and my grades in it were disheartening.

My personal life was disheartening, too. I was a member of the Southern Student Organizing Committee [an activist group]. Some of us had gone to Martin Luther King's funeral in Atlanta.

The war in Vietnam was raging. There was deep division in the country. Vice President Hubert Humphrey came to Furman, and I couldn't decide whether to stand up in acclaim for his civil rights record or sit down

in protest of his acquiescence in President Johnson's war policies.

And I was confused about what to do after graduation that spring — if I graduated.

All this angst and confusion came to a head when I met with Professor McCahan about my grades. She gave me a pep talk that worked wonders. I went upstairs in the Furman library and practically camped out, studying for the final exam.

My grade on her final ensured that I could walk across the stage at graduation, and I'm forever grateful to her. I still have the course textbook, which, like the professor, was a repository of wisdom.

Furman wasn't easy. But it was, for me, an invaluable experience.

— BILL HIGGINS

*The author, a 1968 graduate, works with Ed's Editions, a used and collectible books store in Columbia, S.C.*



## University introduces Merit-based Legacy Scholarship

**FURMAN HAS ALWAYS TAKEN PRIDE** in its family atmosphere. In that spirit, the university is now offering increased support for alumni whose children or grandchildren want to continue the family tradition by attending Furman.

Furman is introducing a competitive, Merit-based Legacy Scholarship to be awarded to five high school seniors whose parent or grandparent attended Furman and who have displayed exceptional academic ability and distinctive personal accomplishments. The Merit-based Legacy Scholarship is worth \$25,000 annually and is renewable.

The selection committee for the scholarship is looking for such qualities as leadership,

service, character, creativity and passion. To be considered, applicants must complete the Merit-based Legacy Scholarship application, as well as a Furman Admission Network interview (see page 30). The deadline for requesting an interview is January 15. Additional information and a link to the application are available by visiting [www.furman.edu/scholarship](http://www.furman.edu/scholarship).

Recipients will be notified no later than April 1, 2012.

Also beginning with the Class of 2016, Furman will increase, from \$5,000 to \$10,000, the value of the scholarship it awards to each accepted legacy student. If the student is eligible for any Furman scholarship in excess of the

amount of the Legacy Scholarship, the higher scholarship will be awarded and will replace the Legacy Scholarship.

Furman has found that legacy students bring unique qualities to the university. Information compiled by the Office of Admission confirms that legacies are traditionally strong achievers at Furman and are highly competitive in the overall application pool — no doubt because of their exceptional ancestry.

*To learn more about legacy scholarships, contact [admission@furman.edu](mailto:admission@furman.edu).*