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Hallmarks of Furman's 2011 retirees: Commitment, foresight and integrity

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Hallmarks of Furman's 2011 retirees: Commitment, foresight and integrity

At the close of the 2010-11 academic year, Furman said farewell to five faculty members who worked at the university for a combined 173 years. As a tribute to the retirees, all of whom have been awarded emeritus status, Furman magazine asked departmental colleagues (and, in two cases, former students) to comment on their careers and contributions.

Photos by Jeremy Fleming.

JIM EDWARDS

In all, Jim Edwards has spent 45 years on Furman's campus: four as a student and, since 1970, 41 more on the faculty. He has had an impact on everything from the dorm rooms to the classrooms, and he has the singular honor of being the only Furman professor to have won the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching twice — in 1975 and again in 2011.

What Jim will be remembered for most, though, is his deep love of ideas. He thinks in a way that the rest of us aspire to. I remember seeing him after class not long ago, and he was visibly agitated. I learned that he was struggling with a problem in Descartes' *Meditations* that had come up in his Introduction to Philosophy course. After 40 years of teaching this introductory course, he still thought seriously about such issues.

Jim struck a rare balance between the demands of teaching and of scholarship. He has been an extremely caring and influential teacher and, at the same time, an incredibly productive scholar. His book *Ethics Without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life* has had a profound impact on the profession. When I was interviewing people at the American Philosophical Association meeting to hire Jim's replacement, several commented that his book had "changed their philosophical lives."

The highest compliment that Jim can give someone is that they are "drop dead smart." Jim himself is drop dead smart, and he has lived a life of the mind to which the rest of us continue to aspire.



NOEL KANE-MAGUIRE

"Bloody ripper!"

Denizens of the Furman chemistry department heard those words from Australia native Noel Kane-Maguire —



KM to his students and colleagues — time and again during his 38-year career. With this phrase, KM would demonstrate his excitement over a positive research result and instill confidence and enthusiasm in his students.

As my undergraduate research mentor, KM taught me how to *do* science, but more importantly, he instilled in me the passion and confidence to tackle difficult problems. Every result is intriguing to KM, and he takes you with him on this wild scientific ride.

At Furman, KM distinguished himself as a teacher and scholar. An early pioneer of engaged learning, he published more than 50 peer-reviewed articles in prestigious professional journals, all co-authored with undergraduate students. He was also a sought-after professor, as was evident when he was presented the 1985 Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching.

Despite these accomplishments, it is the role KM played in the lives of his colleagues and students that people will probably remember most. From his yearly slide shows depicting the antics of the department to his direction of the annual departmental Ironman and Ironwoman competitions, KM helped students and faculty forge the lasting relationships for which Furman is known. But it is the individual friendships that KM formed with each of us that stand as the most enduring markers of his success.

Bloody ripper of a career!

— SARAH E. WORTH '92

— PAUL WAGENKNECHT '86

BETTY KELLY

That Betty Kelly and I are Furman alumni and have worked together for 25 years at the James B. Duke Library creates interesting dimensions to our friendship.



Nearly 10 years after graduating, I returned to Furman as a reference librarian. Just two months earlier Betty had also returned to the library, where she had worked as a student before graduating in 1967. Now she was head of technical services.

Ever since, her work and the decisions she made reminded me that “holding to the highest standard” was always the operative factor behind the outcomes. When she served as interim director of the library in the mid-1990s, her generosity and high standards prevailed. It was something she expected of everyone who was associated with Furman, and especially of herself. Regardless of the situation, you could depend on Betty to take the high road.

I have always drawn tremendous confidence and support from Betty, as have a great many people. Given her warm and welcoming nature, it was rare to go by her office and not see a colleague or student talking with her. No matter how busy she was, she would take time to help others iron out the rough spots.

When I think of Betty Kelly, I think of Furman University, and when I think of Furman, I think of Betty. She and Furman each reside in a part of my psyche where integrity rules. She required that of herself, required it of the library, and required it of the university. That’s a standard worth keeping.

— STEVE RICHARDSON '77

ELAINE NOCKS

It didn’t take long for Elaine Nocks to make an impression at Furman after she arrived in 1973. She quickly established herself as a talented teacher, which the



university formally acknowledged in 1987 when she was named the recipient of the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching.

She was also instrumental in transforming the psychology department by advocating an increased emphasis on laboratory and research experiences. She was one of the first to work with research students and to have a student present a paper at a professional convention. In short, she helped “engage” the department before we knew what engaged learning was.

Because of her empathy, thoughtfulness and warmth, Elaine developed deep and lasting connections with students and colleagues alike. And when, at mid-career, she determined she had yet to find her true calling, she courageously took a risk — and a leave of absence — to obtain a Master of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

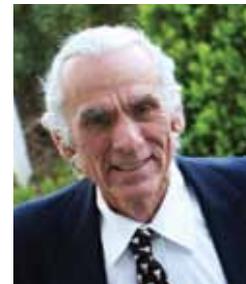
Fortunately, she came back to Furman — and was soon awarded a \$2 million grant from the Lilly Foundation to develop a program to help students and faculty think more deeply about their choice of vocation in the context of their life’s purpose. Thus the Lilly Center for Vocational Reflection was born.

Today, this thriving program stands as a legacy to Elaine’s foresight and impact. As her Lilly co-director, David Bost, has said, “Her life is evidence that vocation is an ongoing process of discovery, growth and surprise.”

— GIL EINSTEIN

FRANK POWELL

As professor of health sciences at Furman since 1974 and, more recently, as director of sustainability, Frank Powell has often been ahead of his time.



Always committed to social and environmental policy change, he spoke out early and forcefully about health and environmental causes — protecting rivers, lakes and forests, promoting plant-based diets — that are now widely accepted but were considered radical when he proposed them.

In the 1980s Frank began the Senior Activity Rejuvenation Program, in which he preached the value of rigorous activity for senior citizens. Instead of promoting the virtues of walking and light exercise, he spurred senior citizens to long jump and high jump, throw the shot put and discus, run sprints, and train for state and national competitions. The results were profound, and Frank’s work gained national attention. Of course, today publications from *Time* to the *Wall Street Journal* regularly tout the virtues of vigorous activity into old age.

Soon after arriving at Furman, Frank collaborated with the late Sandor Molnar to develop a fitness concepts course that replaced the traditional physical skills courses that Furman and most liberal arts schools required. Their efforts laid the foundation for a course that has been a hallmark of Furman’s curriculum for nearly 40 years. For two decades he also coached the divers on Furman’s intercollegiate team, and many students learned the basics of gymnastics by taking his popular skills class.

In both actions and words, Frank has been a pioneer — and often has proven to be a visionary.

— BILL PIERCE