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## One teacher's influence: Dorothy Richey

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**Virginia Anne Rivers Wood** '55, December 23, Dawn, Mo. She was a former teacher.

**Sidney Broadus Cooper, Jr.**, M.A. '57, January 8, Columbia, S.C. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II before becoming a teacher, principal and district administrator in Anderson County, S.C. His career in education spanned 39 years, 27 of which were with the State Department of Education.

**Eddy B. de Armas** '59, January 24, Travelers Rest, S.C. He became a citizen of the United States in 1969 and worked for the U.S. Postal Service, from which he retired.

**William Thomas Fowler** '59, October 10, Raleigh, N.C. He worked in security for the North Carolina state government.

**Wylie Ronald Harbin** '60, March 11, Greenville. He served in the South Carolina National Guard in the 1960s and worked in sales in the electrical business. He was also active with the Buddy Howard and Rodney Howard racing teams and for several years was the pace car driver at Greenville-Pickens Speedway.

**Frank D. Hunt, Jr.** '60, January 21, Greenville. He was formerly with Jacobs Engineering.

**Charles F. Cobb** '61, March 1, Spindale, N.C. He graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and was

a minister and missionary for 55 years. He served churches in the Carolinas and in Ohio, where he also spent 12 years as a missionary and taught Bible classes at Boyce Bible School and in the Mansfield Prison. He retired to Rutherford County, N.C., in 2000, and was interim pastor of several churches and interim director of missions for the Sandy Run Baptist Association. He served in the South Carolina National Guard.

**Gary A. Smoak** '61, December 31, Columbia, S.C. He was a pastor of many Baptist churches in South Carolina. When not involved in full-time pastoral work, he was a county administrator in several counties in the Carolinas. He was active in

Rotary International for 20 years, serving as president of the Monroe, N.C., chapter in 1998. In the early 1990s he was appointed to the South Carolina Solid Waste Advisory Council, and he was active in the United Way and other civic organizations. In 2004, at the age of 65, he earned his doctorate from Erskine Theological Seminary.

**Helen Elizabeth Pearl Summerlin Wilkins** '62, January 28, Biloxi, Miss. She worked at the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce and at Keesler Air Force Base. She wrote for the *Air Force Times* and was a member of the Arlington Ladies at Arlington National Cemetery.

## ONE TEACHER'S INFLUENCE: DOROTHY RICHEY

*A few issues back we asked for your stories about your favorite Furman teachers, mentors and "heroes." This is the first of a series of articles we plan to run with this theme. If you have a similar story to share, please send it to jim.stewart@furman.edu.*

### SPEECH PROFESSOR DOROTHY RICHEY

was by far my most impressive influence at Furman in the 1950s.

She was a smallish, rather intense woman with wire-frame glasses perched on her nose. She had a patient, precise, rather formal speaking voice, with every word deliberately selected, and a half-pursed mouth that always seemed on the verge of primly stifled laughter. A cruelly twisted hand had ended her professional acting career.

As a first-semester freshman rat, I chose to avoid the maximum amount of sophomore hazing at the men's campus by spending as much time as possible across town at the Woman's College, especially in the evenings. Richey made this possible by casting me in the first play, giving me a juicy role with a comic drunk scene. She was later to warily entrust me with famous roles in works by Shakespeare, Wilde, O'Neill and Maxwell Anderson.

My competency for these parts came up short,

but she made sure those shortcomings were not due to lack of preparation. She re-taught me how to stand, to move, to speak, to think about what I was reciting. My career path wasn't going to be the theater — something about lack of talent and commitment, as I recall — but she gave me a delightful lifelong hobby and an appreciation for what makes good theater good and, infrequently, great.

When I hear my director daughter patiently explaining to her students or adult actors some bit of stage technique, I hear Richey's voice making the same point.

We were not close friends. There were no chatty conversations over coffee or visits to her home. The traditional professor/student gap was more difficult to bridge in those days, and I think her intrinsic formality would have precluded it, anyway. But she wrote me warm notes and gave me occasional liberties, like letting me nap on the faculty lounge sofa after I had been up all night producing *The Hornet* newspaper.

In my senior year, when I was no longer its editor, *The Hornet* ran an article essentially accusing her of being a member of (gasp) the American Civil



Liberties Union and choosing plays to fit a certain ideology, which was absurd and made her students very angry. Richey's ideology was excellence. She quite rightfully ignored the controversy, and I don't know whether anything came of it. I do know that she held the only doctorate in the speech department but was never its head during at least three changes. Whether or not the job was ever offered or refused I do not know.

She retired sometime in the early 1960s, moved to Florida and wrote an autobiography, *Twice Told Tales*. When I read it a few years ago, I was saddened that only about 10 dispassionate pages were devoted to her Furman years.

Dorothy Richey was one of the two or three non-family members in my life who gave me gifts that keep right on giving today and even into the next generation — gifts and lessons that have been passed on to people she never knew, like my director daughter.

— AL McNEELY

*The author, a 1957 graduate, is a retired advertising executive living in Columbia, S.C.*