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Walk of Fame: Norwood Cleveland's Victory March

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WALK OF FAME

Norwood Cleveland's Victory March

As a young man, Norwood Cleveland was a devoted Furman football fan — so devoted that, in October of 1926, he made a bold promise. At a Furman practice, Cleveland, a member of the Class of 1913, vowed that should the Hurricane upset Georgia in Athens — a rare accomplishment for the teams of that day — he would walk the 101 miles back to Greenville.

You guessed it. On October 16, W.L. Laval's squad stunned Georgia 14–7. *The Greenville News* reported that “men close to the team believe [Cleveland's] promise substantially aided Furman's morale in the conflict.”

And Cleveland was ready to make good on his commitment.

Years later, in a 1972 interview with the *News*, the 81-year-old Cleveland described the situation. “There was no getting out of it,” he said. The paper had reported on his promise, “and everybody knew about it.”

So he cheerfully began the journey from the goalpost at Georgia's Sanford Field. A friend who had joined him at the game agreed to accompany him on the first leg, and they made it to Royston. The next day, Cleveland crossed the state line and marched into Anderson.

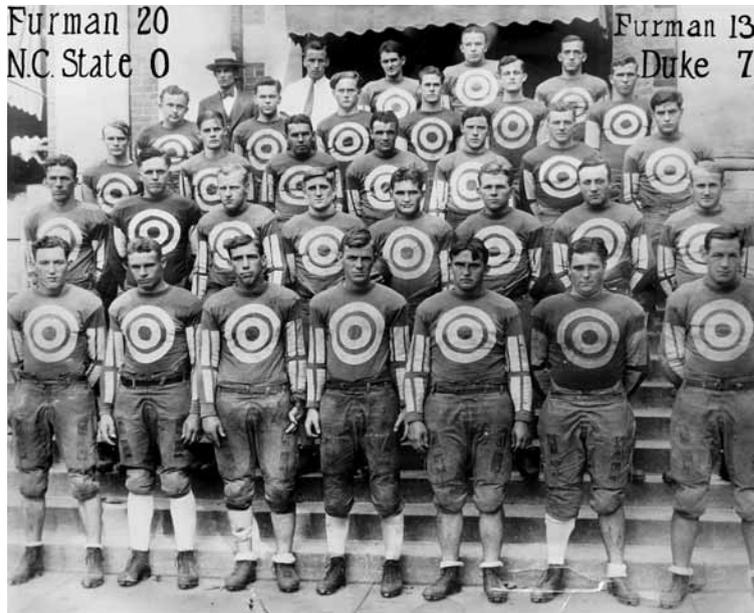
Initially, Cleveland recalled, he had planned to do the walk in three days, but arrangements could not be made for a Tuesday celebration. So “they sent a couple of reporters from the *News* down to get me to put it off for a day.”

There was just one problem. An acquaintance had made a \$10 wager that “Naughty” could make it home in three days, and Cleveland didn't want him to lose the bet. An agreement was reached, however, and Cleveland remained in Anderson the extra night, where, he said, he spent most of his time “in a hot tub of water resting my feet.”

Virtually the entire student body and several hundred townfolk turned out to greet his arrival at Manly Field October 20 — recorded at 4:12 p.m. He was met with cheers of “Naughty, you're the best sport in Greenville,” treated to a parade down Main Street, crowned “king of sports,” and presented a football autographed by the Furman team. “They even had me in the movie newsreels downtown,” he recalled. For his part, Cleveland had told the paper that he felt “joy in every step.”

He went on to serve as postmaster of Marietta, S.C., for 39 years and remained a staunch Furman supporter throughout his life. When he died in 1987, his obituary listed his greatest claim to fame as his walk from Athens to Greenville.

— JIM STEWART



Endowment, the university would not have survived. But football fever still burned.

Influential trustees and alumni soon grew unhappy with Manly Field. There wasn't enough seating, they complained. Because the field had never been sodded, injuries could be harsh. And federal funds were available.

Although Furman president Bennette E. Geer was opposed, in 1934 the trustees voted to seek funds to build a new, bigger stadium. They mortgaged property and borrowed \$20,000 from the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. to buy the land. On Halloween Day in 1936, Furman christened Surrine Stadium with a victory over Davidson.

Manly Field was not abandoned. It hosted Sally League baseball games, served as Furman's football practice field, and became the university's ROTC drill ground. But never again would it echo with cheers of celebration or witness such golden victories. |F|

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