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Special times and memories: Revisiting those Furman days

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SPECIAL TIMES AND MEMORIES: REVISITING THOSE FURMAN DAYS

"Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"

Borrowing this line from a Joni Mitchell song, we began the September meeting of the Alumni Association Board of Directors by sharing memories of our student days at Furman. Not surprisingly, we appreciate those special times much more today than when we were actually experiencing them.



Board members represent many decades of Furman alumni, but there were common threads in our memories: of late-night discussions in dorm rooms and cutting class the next day; of wonderful professors (and of those we avoided); of mandatory Religion-in-Life lectures and bypassed fine arts opportunities; of relief at the end of practice for a varsity sport; of the days of no-greens-fee golf; and of the move to the "new" campus and our amazement at its beauty as it continues to mature and expand.

Regardless of graduation year, all of us could have recited two other thoughts in unison. I daresay all alumni could do the same.

First, Furman was the catalyst for lifelong friendships. Whether or not we knew it at the time, those relationships helped to define us, and we must admit that the confluence of that time and place will not happen again.

Second, the value of a Furman diploma continues to increase with each passing year. Just as when we were in school, the talents and abilities of students continue to be nurtured and refined under the guidance of an outstanding faculty. Moreover, the accomplish-

ments of Furman graduates are awe-inspiring and reflect the prestige alma mater has attained.

Since the release of Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" in 1970, many artists, from the Counting Crows to Amy Grant '82 (yes, she went to Furman for two years), have recorded the tune. If you listen to either contemporary or "oldies" radio stations, you're likely to hear it, and the catchy song just might stay with you for a while.

When you encounter the refrain, let it serve as a reminder of your Furman experience (except for the bad grammar). And then take action. Register on the Alumni Web site at <http://alumni.furman.edu> to reconnect with classmates and learn about Furman Club gatherings in your area. Visit campus for special events such as Homecoming, a concert or play.

Better yet, read about the "Because Furman Matters" campaign on page 16 of this magazine, or on-line at www.becausefurmanmatters.com. Then respond generously. Together, we can ensure that Furman does not fall into the category of something "that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone."

ANNIVERSARY PLANS

Believe it or not, it has been almost 50 years since Furman moved to its "new" campus. The bold vision that President John Plyler had so many years ago has certainly proven to be the right decision.

One of his sons, John Plyler, Jr. '56, is working with a committee of faculty, staff, alumni and students to plan a major anniversary celebration next year, which you'll hear more about in coming months. He has found some wonderful film footage of old campus traditions that young and old will enjoy.

The committee is developing special activities and displays to honor Furman's past and celebrate its promising future — including some (drum roll for shameless plug) specially designed for Homecoming 2008, October 10-12.

Although Homecoming '07 has only just ended, we're already thinking ahead, so start making your plans now to join us. Classes ending in 3 and 8 will be having special reunions.

TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN

The first of what we hope to be many alumni trips to Chile is filling up fast.

The trip to Patagonia is scheduled January 10-18. You'll stay at a resort developed by Jim Anthony, developer of the Cliffs Communities near Furman. Furman hopes this is the start of an ongoing program in Chile that will involve students, professors and alumni in eco-tourism, wellness and service opportunities.

Cost of the trip is approximately \$4,000 per person, which includes air fare from Atlanta and all lodging, meals and activities. To learn more, visit <http://alumni.furman.edu> and click on the Travel Programs link.

In addition, Jane Dungan, associate director of the Alumni Association, has worked with history professor Steve O'Neill '82 and professor emeritus Bill Lavery to plan a wonderful trip to Charleston, S.C., January 23-27.

Join them in examining the culture, history, commerce and cuisine of South Carolina's most historic city, including private tours of the Charleston Tea Plantation and the Maersk Line Shipping Company (the world's largest), a study of the myths and realities of the Holy City, and a special Lowcountry meal presented by Charleston Cooks. For costs and other information, contact Jane at (864) 294-2972 or e-mail jane.dungan@furman.edu.

— HARRIET ARNOLD WILBURN '74

The writer is president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors.