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## Model teacher and citizen: John Hoskins, 1917-2006

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## Model teacher and citizen: John Hoskins, 1917-2006

In 1966, John Hoskins returned to Furman as professor and chair of the sociology department. He had originally joined the Furman faculty in 1949, but from 1960 to 1966 he taught at other colleges.

I also arrived at Furman in 1966 and joined what, for several years, was to be a two-person department. Even before my family and I arrived in Greenville, John demonstrated by his letters of welcome that he was willing to offer assistance, both practical and academic. This ability to quietly help, advise and encourage made him an excellent colleague and friend.

Other traits also defined John Hoskins, who died December 31 at the age of 89. His son, Graham Hoskins, a 1973 Furman graduate, recounts an anecdote from John's youth that emphasizes his commitment to education:

"During his youth in the Depression, my father spoke to a campus representative from Georgetown College in Kentucky who had come to his high school," Graham says. "My father expressed a desire to attend college, but did not know how he would pay for his education. The representative told him to come to the college in the fall and they would find a campus job for him. The job turned out to be shoveling coal into the boilers in the heat plant for a four-hour shift each day!"

John's love of learning persisted throughout his life and led him to fields of study ranging from architecture and Oriental art to humor, personal finance, religion, and crafts, such as silver working.

As a Furman teacher, John is probably remembered best for two courses. One, Marriage and Family, was a blend of sociological scholarship and practical advice. Former students have described it as the course they remember best, and some even suggest that it changed their lives.

Jim Pitts '60, former Furman chaplain, states, "I was privileged to initially know Dr. Hoskins when I was a student. His Marriage and Family course contributed to my success in soon celebrating with Nancy our 50th wedding anniversary." On the other hand, there were those students who broke off engagements after confronting some of the realities of marriage discussed in the course.

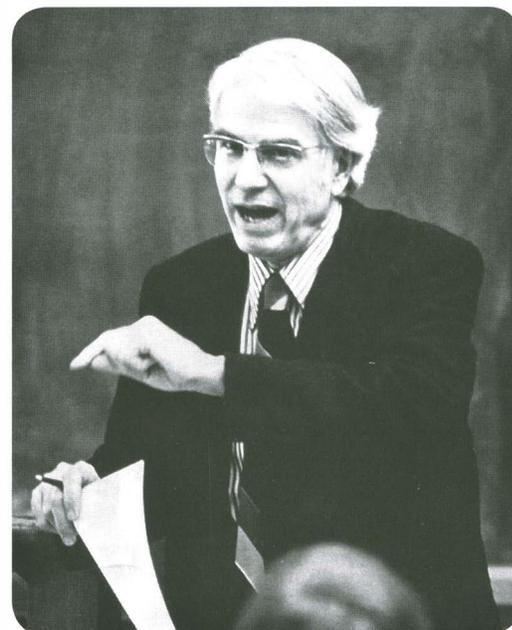
John and his beloved wife, Twinkle, embodied in their marriage many of the ideals and principles presented in the Marriage and Family class. Their 65 years together were characterized by commitment, respect and love.

The second course, Social Problems, reflected John's genuine concern with such issues as justice, equality, peace and the rights of all persons. Again, to quote Graham:

"My father believed in social justice, in part fostered by his religious convictions that Jesus decried the corrosive effects of wealth, and [it was] the responsibility of the rich to share their wealth and care for the poor and downtrodden. My father believed in the personal dignity and worth of all people and felt that everyone in society deserved respect, housing and health care. . . . The lessons of his sociology study and his religious convictions about social justice were completely intertwined."

John represented the best of what it means to live in a democratic society — namely, responsible citizenship and concern for the entire community. He and Twinkle provided leadership and service to a number of organizations that deal in a positive way with social issues, among them the Greenville Mental Health Association, Senior Action, Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, Greenville Urban Ministry and Greenville Literacy Association.

John also found great pleasure in such



pursuits as travel, gardening, landscaping, woodworking and house design, and he readily shared the fruits of his labors. And just as my family was welcomed to the Furman community even before our arrival, many other colleagues, students and friends also experienced the warmth and hospitality of John and Twinkle Hoskins.

We gratefully remember John's professional commitment, his genuine care for students and the larger community, and his encouraging and stabilizing presence.

— EUGENE M. JOHNSON,  
*Professor Emeritus of Sociology*

*In addition to his wife and his children — Tyree '68, Graham '73 and Neil — John Hoskins is survived by eight grandchildren, a great-grandchild, and two sisters. Memorials: Habitat for Humanity.*