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April Bernardo '06

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A plaque for the Shack

'Rustic mountain cottage' recognized as campus landmark

Most Furman graduates probably aren't aware of the significance of one of the university's least ostentatious buildings: the Shack.

Nestled alongside the Hut, (Eco-) Cottage and Cabin on the lakefront road leading to the Bell Tower and Old College, the Shack was built in 1937 on the Greenville Woman's College campus at the behest of Dean Virginia Thomas. In her book *Academy and College: The History of the Woman's College of Furman University*, English professor Judith Bainbridge describes the Shack as a "rustic mountain cottage" that served as an "informal meeting place" for students.

When the women moved to the current campus in 1961, the Shack came as well — the only building from the Woman's College to make it to the unified Furman campus.

Last year, while researching a paper on the history of women at Furman, Jennifer Ward '07 uncovered the history of the Shack and determined that its place in university annals deserved to be acknowledged. "I realized how significant this building really is and thought it should be recognized accordingly," she says.

Her efforts paid off. At the Senior Order brunch during Homecoming Weekend in October, Ward and Nancy Willis Massey '44, the senior member of Senior Order in attendance, unveiled a plaque commemorating the Shack's historical significance.

The plaque, which now sits outside

the house, states: "The Shack, built in 1937, served as a snack bar and rustic gathering place on the campus of the university's coordinate women's college until it was moved to Furman's new campus in 1961. Now a student residence, it is the only remaining structure from the former Greenville Woman's College."

But how and when was the Shack converted from meeting place to student housing?

In December of 1970, retention at Furman was high and a large group of students were about to return to campus from studying abroad. The university was concerned that there wouldn't be enough beds to go around.

Helen McCallie '71, a Senior Order member now living near St. Louis, sent this note recalling what happened: "One of my roommates mentioned to Dean [Marguerite] Chiles that the five of us in our suite would be willing to move into the Shack. She said this rather as a joke, since there was no chance of anyone ever getting to live there.

"The next day, Dean Chiles called me in to ask if I thought we would be willing. Were we ever!" Which is how McCallie and her roommates — Betsy O'Kelley (Milford), Betty Hughes (Harry), Mary Gale Boyd (Brown) and Julia Harding (Mies) — became the first students to live in the Shack.

"What an adventure it was! Since it was a new thing, even faculty were asking to be invited to parties," wrote McCallie, recalling how "special" she



Jennifer Ward says of her efforts, "This is something I am proud to leave behind."

and her roommates felt. "We entertained at fondue parties . . . What a shame I spent many more hours planning out parties than I did on my independent study, but look at what I remember now! That was the most fun semester five girls could have had."

So here's to the Shack, for finally receiving its due as a campus landmark; to the trail-blazing women from the Class of '71, who delighted in being the first of many residents of the historic building; and to Jennifer Ward, whose sense of history made the recognition possible.

Ward is hoping to compile an anecdotal history of the Shack that will be kept in the residence. If you have stories about the Shack that you would like to share, please e-mail them to jennifer.ward@furman.edu.

This story adapted from an article by April Bernardo '06 in the October 28 issue of The Paladin.

Drew is a major account executive with IKON in Norcross, Ga. ■ **Erica Kathleen Sutton** (M.A. '05) and Jason Allen Culbertson, September 3. Erica teaches at Clinton (S.C.) Elementary School and Jason is executive director of the South Carolina Teacher Advancement Program.

■ **Jeff Mullins** and **Amelia Wagner**, July 16. They live in Morgantown, W.Va.

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Next reunion in 2010

Julia Bales is employed by About Golf, a golf simulation company in Beijing, China. She is the development manager

for the Beijing division of golf course digitization and development. ■ **Brent Hughes Wales Blankenship** is a brokerage assistant with Morgan Keegan & Co. in Memphis, Tenn. ■ **Lauren Ruth Brown** of St. Simons Island, Ga., is beach club supervisor with the Sea Island Company. ■ **Ellie Bye**

is a second grade teacher at Cherrydale Elementary School in Greenville and is pursuing her master's degree in elementary education at Furman. ■ **Caitlin Rose Caldwell** of Hoschton, Ga., is a project engineer with Ordner Construction. ■ **Richard Chewning** works as environmental