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Loyalty personified

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Furman philanthropy

Loyalty personified

Early in 1953, John Roy Folsom agreed to assume an important task: the presidency of the Alumni Association.

His appointment to such a major leadership post was especially significant, because he would serve as the first president of a united Furman Alumni Association — one that would include graduates of both Furman and of Greenville Woman's College. In previous years, GWC alumnae had maintained their own separate organization. But with the groundbreaking for the new campus just months away, establishing a single Alumni Association seemed a logical advance step in anticipation of the new campus uniting the entire student body in one location.

Folsom, a 1940 Furman graduate and Navy veteran of World War II, helped make the transition a smooth one. At the time he and his wife, Anita Anderson Folsom '40 (whom he married in 1941), lived in Greenville, where he was an insurance executive with Liberty Life.

John, who as a student edited the *Bonhomie* and was elected to Quaternion, the select men's honorary society, seemed especially excited about the opportunity to lead the Alumni Association at such a defining moment in Furman history. As he wrote in the May-June 1953 issue of *Furman Magazine*, "To be a Furman graduate is in itself a source of genuine pride . . . Furman men and women have a particularly great opportunity at this time. Certainly, our combined and wholehearted cooperation is needed more than ever before, and I wish to call upon all Furman alumni to join me in demonstrating complete loyalty to the institution which continues to mean so much to us.

"We have the opportunity to help Furman become an even greater university . . . Our support, now, is vitally important to the future of Furman, and I know that all of us will want to help our school obtain the facilities it needs and attain the position it deserves. With our enthusiastic and generous assistance, it will."

As Alumni Association president, John Folsom was among those who turned a shovel at the groundbreaking for the new campus in October of 1953.

Folsoms have stellar history of commitment to Furman



Anita and John Folsom hear one of many tributes in recognition of their lives and works during the dedication ceremony for Folsom Commons.

After completing his term as president he and Anita remained in Greenville until 1960, when they moved to Columbia, S.C., where he served with distinction as chief executive officer of Home Federal Savings and Loan (later South Carolina Federal). He retired in 1988 but stayed on as the bank's chairman until it merged with First Union in 1993.

In 1979 John was recognized by *The South* magazine as one of the 12 most influential individuals in Columbia — and not just because of his business accomplishments. Active in civic and community causes, he is a lifelong Rotarian who has been president of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Richland-Lexington Airport Commission. In addition, he has been an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina and a member of the boards of the American Heart Association, Columbia College and a number of other organizations.

Through the years, the Folsoms have maintained a strong commitment to Furman. Their many contributions of time, talent and resources include the establishment of the John Roy Folsom and Anita Anderson Folsom Scholarship.

More recently, their names became a permanent part of the "new" campus. Thanks to their generous gift, the popular gathering area between Furman Hall and Johns Hall is now known as Folsom Commons.

Folsom Commons has been called the crossroads of the campus because so many students, faculty and staff pass through it each day on their way to classes, the dining hall, the University Center or the residence halls. With its beautiful design and landscaping, the area is a great place to socialize, study or take a quick nap in the midst of a busy day.

Folsom Commons was dedicated in February of this year. At the dedication, the Folsoms' son, John W. ("Johnnie"), spoke on behalf of the family and emphasized his parents' lifelong support and love for education — and specifically for Furman.

His sentiments echoed those his father had expressed 50 years before, when he stressed the essential role alumni can play in helping Furman "attain the position it deserves."

Clearly, John Roy Folsom meant what he said.

— **Bob Fuzy**
Director, Major Gifts