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Alum's book earns MLA recognition

Furman University

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Alum's book earns MLA recognition

Dana Phillips '80, recipient of the 2004 Modern Language Association Prize for Independent Scholars for his book, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*, says that he first tried to integrate his interests in ideas, literature and nature during his senior year at Furman.

He recalls spending Friday afternoons that year with philosophy professor James C. Edwards and a philosophy graduate, Tom Turner '73, "talking about Henry David Thoreau not only as a great writer, but also as a thinker of consequence." Ten years later, while in graduate school at Duke University, Phillips wrote a paper on "the ironic relationship between post-modern ideas about nature and professional bass fishing." The paper was titled "Is Nature Necessary?" and, after he presented it at a conference on popular culture, it was published as an article.

Says Phillips, "Without having yet heard the term, I had become an ecocritic."

With *The Truth of Ecology*, he is an award-winning ecocritic. The MLA honor, which recognizes distinguished work in languages and literatures, comes with a

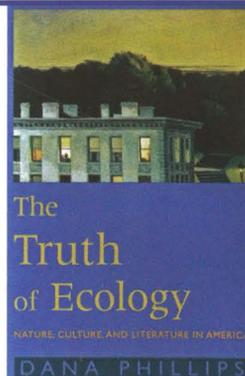
\$1,000 prize and one-year membership in the MLA, the nation's largest learned society in the humanities.

Publisher Oxford University Press says the book provides "a wide-ranging appraisal of contemporary environmental thought. It explores such topics as the history of ecology, radical science studies and radical ecology, the need for greater theoretical sophistication in ecocriticism, the dubious legacy of Thoreau, and the contradictions of current nature writing."

Phillips' former professor, Edwards, says, "To describe *The Truth of Ecology* as a splendid work of literary criticism is, while quite true, to peg its worth too low. It escapes its disciplinary matrix, drawing on the work of Wittgenstein, Wallace Stevens, Thoreau, Ernst Mayr, A.R. Ammons, Richard Rorty, Michel Serres, and many others to produce an astonishing blend of poetry, philosophy, ecological theory, and just plain hard thinking.

"Anyone interested in the deeply American tradition of nature-writing will find Dana's work revelatory and essential."

After earning his degree in philosophy and English from Furman, Phillips earned



his master's in English from the University of Georgia and his Ph.D. in English from Duke. He has taught at Princeton, Bryn Mawr, Brown and the University of Pennsylvania, and he spent the summer of 2004 at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, as a Fulbright Senior Scholar. A native of Graniteville, S.C., he now lives in Philadelphia.

And those Friday afternoon bull sessions from his Furman days? They appear to have left a lasting impression. He recently completed a manuscript titled *Leaving Walden: The Several Constitutions of Henry David Thoreau*.

Tollison compiles photo history of Furman

Courtney L. Tollison, a member of the Class of 1999 and a part-time professor of history at Furman, completed a labor of love this fall with the publication of a new photographic history of the university.

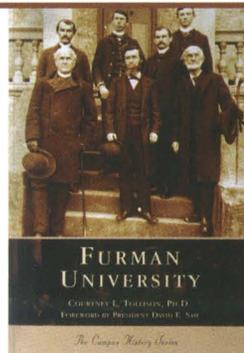
Published by Arcadia Publishing as part of its Campus History Series, *Furman University* features more than 200 photos covering the university's growth and development since its founding in 1826. The book features a foreword by President David Shi as well as Tollison's commentaries on major events and key moments in Furman's history.

Tollison, who holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of South Carolina, became interested in Furman history during her undergraduate days and in recent years has coordinated the Furman University Oral History Project. In writing the book, she combed the Furman archives and those of the Greenville

County Historical Society, while drawing from the knowledge and recollections of those whom she interviewed for the oral history project.

The book offers a pictorial trip through Furman's early years as an academy and theological institution and profiles key administrators, professors and events that influenced the university's course through the years. It includes sections on student life, academics, athletics and campus facilities.

Tollison says, "I wanted to provide a visual tour of the university's history and campus traditions, from Homecoming to May Day celebrations, Orientation and celebratory dunks in the lake. People who have been associated with Furman over the last 45 years have the chance to see photographs from the Greenville Woman's College and the original campus in downtown Greenville. They'll get



a better feel for the history and flavor of 'old' Furman while enjoying the more recent photographs from the new campus."

The book is available from the Furman bookstore, from on-line dealers nationwide, or from the publisher at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

Arcadia Publishing is the largest local and regional history publisher in the United States, with more than 2,000 books in print.