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Golden reunion gift

Jane Dungan
Furman University

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Golden reunion gift

Class of '54 helps establish new campus showplace

Members of the Class of 1954 returned to Furman during Homecoming in November for a special 50th reunion. For some, it marked their first visit to the “new” campus.

Although class members spent their college years on the downtown campus, many feel a strong connection to the new campus. The students of their era enthusiastically supported construction of the new campus and were excited about the possibilities it would provide for growth and expansion. Charles “Bud” Granger, president of the men’s student body, and Jo Ann Perkins Leaphart, president of the Greenville Woman’s College student body, participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus on October 6, 1953.

The Class of 1954 could not have imagined how the new campus would serve as a catalyst for Furman’s emergence as a leading liberal arts college. But they were buoyed by the vision of Furman’s leaders, particularly that of President John L. Plyler. As Leaphart says, “Had it not been for Dr. Plyler’s vision and persistence, Furman University would not be what it is today.”

The class began thinking about the 50th reunion celebration long before 2004 arrived, and when the reunion steering committee gathered on campus in March under the leadership of Edna Wells Boyd and Robbie Brown Prince, they began making plans. One of their tasks was to form a gift selection committee, chaired by John Cothran, that would decide what the class would present to Furman to commemorate their golden anniversary. After much discussion, they decided to support the construction of a plaza behind the recently renovated James B. Duke Library.

According to Cothran, the plaza was chosen because it was something tangible that could be used and enjoyed by today’s students and by campus visitors. During the summer and fall,



Following the Homecoming breakfast on November 6, members of the Class of '54 gathered at the plaza for a group portrait.

the class raised \$48,000 of the \$100,000 needed to name the plaza. Donations toward the fund will continue to be accepted through June 30, the end of Furman’s fiscal year.

Needless to say, members of the Class of '54 are proud of their efforts to help establish a new campus showplace. And as a result, the university community is enjoying a beautiful addition to the campus.

— Jane Dungan
Associate Director, Alumni Association

To contribute to the library plaza project, call Wayne King, director of annual giving, at (864) 294-3474 or e-mail wayne.king@furman.edu.

\$1 million from Currys designated for Chinese Studies program

Scholarships for students traveling to China. The addition of a Chinese language professor. The opportunity to attract more students from China to Furman.

Thanks to the generosity of trustee Ravenel B. Curry III '63 and his wife, Beth, Furman expects to see these ideas come to fruition in the near future.

The Currys recently donated \$1 million toward the university’s expanding Chinese Studies program. According to Tom Kazez, vice president for academic affairs and dean, the gift is expected to fund scholarships, support the hiring of additional faculty and staff to teach Chinese and to coordinate the study abroad program to China, and provide a permanent endowment for the Chinese Studies program. It will also support the Richard W. Riley Institute’s “China’s Global Rise” program, a series of lectures and conferences about China launched during fall term.

“The Curry gift will allow us to enhance and build upon what is already an outstanding program,” says Kazez. “As China grows in importance in the world, it is especially important that our students have a thorough understanding of China in particular and of Asia in general. The Currys’ generosity has ensured that Furman will be able to provide its students with a variety of exceptional opportunities.”

Furman students who major in Asian Studies focus on one of three cultures — China, India or Japan. Those who participate

in the study abroad program to China attend East China Normal University in Shanghai.

Ravenel Curry is president of Eagle Capital Management, an investment management firm in New York City. He holds an M.B.A. degree from the University of Virginia and is a trustee for the Blanton-Peale Institute and the New York Hall of Science. He has been a member of Furman’s Advisory Council, a class agent and president of the Alumni Association.

“Presidents John Johns, Gordon Blackwell and John Plyler built a strong foundation at Furman,” says Curry. “President David Shi and his team are clearly building upon this lofty platform and helping Furman achieve even greater national recognition.

“I have seen academic excellence drive economic growth throughout the United States, and the Greenville area will benefit tremendously as Furman is increasingly recognized as one of the nation’s top liberal arts colleges. Beth and I are pleased to provide this gift.”

The Currys’ gift establishes the university’s second endowment in support of the Department of Asian Studies. The Ed and Beth Evans Jones Endowed Fund for Asian Studies, created in 2000, is named in honor of Ed Jones, professor emeritus of history, and his wife.

— Vince Moore