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Treasured memories

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Treasured memories

I remember Furman. . . .



The author lives in Burlington, N.C., and is director of the Carolina Study Center, an outreach program for college students. See the Web site at www.carolinastudycenter.com.

Its stately buildings nestled among shade trees, dotting the rolling swales at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I remember driving through her wrought-iron gates, my first glimpse of the soaring fountains and the tree-lined mall. I was 18, thrilled but scared, hungry to learn but ignorant of study habit.

It was 1968.

I remember my dorm room. I'd never lived in anything so small. And I remember my freshman roommate, Demetrius Poniatis, a Greek. "But you can call me Jimmy Paris," he said with a smile when we met.

Coming from a small hamlet in central North Carolina, I'd never met a Greek. Or, for that matter, a Jew, or someone from Hawaii or Vermont or Australia.

At Furman, I met them all — and more.

A true liberal arts college, Furman built a community from all 50 states and from many nations of the world. I roomed with people foreign to me, ate with them in the dining commons, debated them in class, went with them to chapel, and even dated some of them who were girls!

I remember the autumn foliage. The oranges, reds and yellows often stopped me in my tracks as I hastened to class. I remember thick frosts, my breath steaming in the sunshine as I shuffled through leaves up to my ankles.

In class I learned of poets, playwrights and wars. I thrilled at geology, Spanish and philosophy. Music wowed me, while math bewildered.

In the school's small classes I could not hide. Professors knew my name. Their bow ties and tweed, their brilliance and their firm insistence that I read and think so stretched me that I've never shrunk back to my original proportions. I am addicted

still to theatre, ballet, books, ideas, music and relationships. Furman made me a lifelong learner.

I remember the fun. Ice skating on frozen fountains. Walking around the lake with a pretty girl. Bonfires and buffoonery with the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. Food fights and dances.

I remember the seriousness. The Vietnam War, the Kent State massacre, Billy Graham in chapel, choosing a major and a vocation, breaking up with someone good, and later someone better, to find the best for me in a spouse.

Today, as a Presbyterian minister who spends much of his time on college campuses, I've seen most of the universities in the East. Their loveliness excites — Dartmouth, Middlebury, William & Mary, Washington and Lee, Virginia, Duke, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

But Furman is the loveliest of all! Her lake and swans, her Bell Tower and people, her fountains and library . . . they are all etched into my very being.

— Stephen M. Crotts '72

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