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The theatrical physicist

Kensy Cone '03

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the Palace Hotel in New York City. ■ **Graham Seagraves** is national sales director for Global Distribution Strategies in Boston, Mass. The company is an employee-owned firm specializing in the strategic development and distribution of investment products. ■

Charles and Alice Morrison '01 Shanlever live in Winston-Salem, N.C. She is in her second year of law school at Wake Forest University and he teaches drama at West Forsyth High School. ■ **Jordan Tidrick** lives in Marietta, Ga., and is a science teacher at North Cobb High School. ■ **Tracy Towle** is coordinator of alumni relations at Miami (Fla.) Country Day School. ■ **MARRIAGES:** **Kristin Leigh Blackwell** and Jason Ray Foster, October 12. They live in Goldsboro, N.C., where Jason is employed as lean manufacturing/quality supervisor at Invensys-APV Systems. ■ **Heather Hudson** and Scott Sistare, August 24. He is an officer in the U.S. Air Force stationed in Orlando, Fla. ■

BIRTH: **Bubba** and Cortney **Smith**, a son, Isaac Ryan, December 22, 2001, Hampden-Sydney, Va. Bubba is an assistant basketball coach at Hampden-Sydney College.

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Next reunion in 2006

Daniel Atkinson, a law student at Washington and Lee University, was selected "Best Oralist" for the Mid-Atlantic Regional of the Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court competition, which simulated proceedings of the International Court of Justice. The competition featured teams from Georgetown University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins School of International Studies. ■ **Bridgett Giles** is finishing her first year at Springfield (Mass.) College as a sport management major while completing an internship at ESPN. ■ **Austin Hardy** is on deployment with the U.S. Army

The theatrical physicist

Theatre arts department enjoys benefits of 'guru in residence'

The sky is no longer the limit for Gene Funderburk. For his sake, we may have to rephrase that age-old maxim and declare that the stratosphere is the limit.

Why? Amid recreational weather forecasting, traveling and gardening, Funderburk also finds time to build and navigate hot-air balloons. No patch of blue is beyond his personal range of visibility. In fact, he has flown balloons over the Taj Mahal and Italy, as well as through the Swiss Alps.

I was nearly exhausted after listening to Funderburk spout off the preceding list of activities, but I had to hold on one more minute because he recently picked up yet another hobby: he is now the official "guru in residence" for Furman's Department of Theatre Arts.

This doesn't mean that he occasionally attends a play and passes out programs. Instead, he installs new lighting at the Theatre, builds sets and works to digitize the entire sound system. When asked if there is anything he can't do, Funderburk merely smiles and says, "I have a short attention span."

He paid attention long enough to graduate from Furman in 1967 with a double major in physics and math. He also found time to play in the Furman band and with the Greenville Symphony. After graduation, he went to work for Mitsubishi Plastics in Greenville and remained with the company for 32 years before retiring. In the meantime, he also built a strong family.

And like their father, Funderburk's three children possess an array of interests. John is a chef, David is a poet and musician, and Sarah will graduate in June from MIT with a degree in brand and cognitive sciences.

Funderburk's wife, Frances Smith '69, fits right in with this group. She is a dialysis nurse, but in addition to possessing a degree in nursing, she also has a degree in piano pedagogy. Certainly one of her husband's remarks about the Furman theatre arts department is also true of his well-rounded family: "There is no dearth of activities around here."

Yet as a double major in math and physics, how did he become involved with Furman's theatre arts department? Was theatre also on his schedule



Gene Funderburk works with Dani Dillard in the Theatre's scene shop.

of extracurricular activities at Furman? Not exactly. But Funderburk — whose given first name is Furman — has been friends with Rhett Bryson, longtime theatre arts professor, for 20 years. He says, "Rhett and I were computer geeks back when nobody had computers."

Because Bryson also shares a passion for hot-air balloons, the two have spent lots of time together. The opportunity to persuade Funderburk to volunteer in the department actually emerged during a conversation the men had at a Christmas party last December. After thinking over the proposal, Funderburk accepted. When telling the story, he grins and asks, "Where else can I get the use of such a well-equipped shop for free?"

The Furman students around the department are excited about the presence of the new "guru in residence." However, rather than adopting this particular moniker, Funderburk prefers the title one of his sons gave him years ago. At the time, Funderburk was a theoretical physicist, but his son called him a "theatrical physicist."

No matter how you refer to him, Funderburk's efforts are greatly appreciated by the folks in theatre arts, where his wit, wisdom and unlimited energy are regularly put to use.

Funderburk shrugs off the work he's doing and says that he's just "giving back and keeping busy." Perhaps that's how he deals with his short attention span. Yet whether or not he realizes it, he's forging an example for both current Furman students and alumni to follow.

— **Kensley Cone '03**

The author, a resident of Thomasville, Ga., earned her B.A. degree in English this spring.