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## Life lessons

Furman University

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## Life lessons

*Rotary ambassadorship provides for memorable summer in Dresden*

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*Next reunion in 2007*

**David Driskill** is vice president for automation with Engineered Products Corporation in Greenville. ■ **DruAnn Byrom Lutinski** and her husband, Hunter, have moved to Russia, where he is a division chief with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency of the Department of Defense. They are based in Moscow. ■

**BIRTHS:** Kelly and **Anna Weber Byars**, a daughter, Margaret Patterson, July 11, Cincinnati, Ohio. ■ **Jerry** and Jennifer **Chapman**, a daughter, Georgia Grace, March 15, Mount Airy, N.C. ■ **Dennis** and Angie **Jackson**, a son, Jacob Grant, July 10, Liberty, S.C. ■ **Robert** and **Stacy Carr Oakley**, a daughter, Hannah Grace, January 30, Durham, N.C.

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*Next reunion in 2003*

**Maryanne Honeycutt Dotson** runs a company called People Power in Louisville, Ky., in which she works with managers and frontline supervisors to increase productivity and performance in the workplace.

■ **Boots** and **Katie Holland** (M.A. '98) **Holder** of Pickens, S.C., have been appointed by the International Mission Board to train as coordinators for a team that is focused on people groups located in Peru and Bolivia. He will research the groups, visit the locations, be the group's advocate at stateside and Latin churches, and supervise team members. She will conduct outreach through church and home. ■ **Steve Wray** has opened his own company, SN Wray & Associates, in Charlotte, N.C. ■ **BIRTHS:** Brian and **Joanne McGregor Morton**, a daughter, Sadie Suesanne, December 11, 2001, Aiken, S.C.

■ **Craig** and Glenn **Stanley**, a son, Griffin Craig, May 14, Monticello, Fla. ■ **Greg** and Beth **Welmaker**, a son, Nathan, May 13, Collegeville, Pa.

Little did Michael Hix know when he headed overseas for the summer that he would be witness to the horrific mid-August floods that swept through Germany and the Czech Republic.

Hix, a 1998 Furman graduate with a degree in music theory, studied German from June to September at the Goethe-Institut in Dresden, where he also studied opera and represented the United States as a Rotary International Cultural Ambassador Fellow. For Hix, who aspires to an operatic career, the opportunity to immerse himself for three months in the German language and culture was unparalleled, especially in such a historic city.

Dresden has been almost completely rebuilt since the end of World War II, when it was virtually obliterated by Allied air strikes. The people of Dresden have since worked tirelessly to restore the historic areas of the city, which is known for its artistic flair and distinctive architecture.

One restoration project still in progress is the Frauenkirche, or Church of Our Lady. This magnificent structure, a symbol of the city for hundreds of years, is being rebuilt using as much of the original brick and stone as possible. Says Hix, "When my German instructors, Iris Marzinek and Helga Georg, or my host Rotarian, Stephan Noth, spoke of these landmarks and of the rebuilding process, you could feel their pride in their city and the tightly woven nature of this community of people."

So in mid-August, when the Elbe River overran its banks and flooded much of the area, including the historic Altstadt (Old City) district, Hix says that the crisis served as a rallying point for the people to demonstrate their resilience.

"Everyone worked together making sandbags or helping their neighbors," he says. "The students at the Goethe-Institut could feel the pride our teachers and neighbors felt for our adopted city, and we did what we could. We spent our time filling sandbags and donating a considerable amount of food to the victims."

Hix says that several art galleries and the historic Semper Opera House suffered extensive



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HIX

damage, but as he points out, "These are highly visible tourist attractions and will be immediately repaired. The real calamity is the destruction of homes in the smaller villages on the Elbe River. Many of the victims did not have insurance, and most lost everything."

Despite the flooding, nothing could diminish the experience for Hix, a professor of voice and music theory at the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, near Tallahassee. With approximately 150 students from more than 40 countries enrolled at the Goethe-Institut during his time there, Hix says that the "life lessons learned" were as instructive as his studies in German grammar and vocabulary. "Attending such an international language school introduced me to cultures, ideas, experiences and people that I never anticipated," he says.

He became particularly adept, he says, at the art of compromise, especially when it came to communicating with his classmates. Because of the diversity of the students attending the institute, Hix says that they relied on "a mixture of baby German and hand gestures." To build relationships, people were forced to overcome their discomfort and insecurity with the language barrier and ultimately to find middle ground.

He illustrated this point by describing the development of his friendship with a classmate, Akatsuki. Hix spoke no Japanese and Akatsuki spoke no English; they chose German as their "language of compromise." Still, it could be difficult to understand each other. As Hix says, "My German explanation of Easter and its importance to Christian culture probably would have given my hometown preacher an aneurysm. But when you have a vocabulary of only a few hundred words and you're interested in discussing cultural differences, all you can do is try — and smile."

All in all, the summer proved to be an invaluable experience for the young musician — so much so that he and his wife, Margaret Jackson, whom he married last December, hope to return to Germany in the next year to pursue careers in opera.



*Top: The Elbe River floods the historic Altstadt district. Left: Restoration of the Frauenkirche is expected to be complete by 2006.*