In general, life's good for this band

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Recommended Citation
Roberts, John (2001) "In general, life's good for this band," Furman Magazine: Vol. 44 : Iss. 1 , Article 112.
Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol44/iss1/112

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Tracy Brooks is a graduate student in criminology at Georgia State University and is working part time with an educational consultant. Curtis Callaway is working toward a master’s degree in American history at the University of South Carolina. Carey Cannon of Arlington, Va., is a member of the U.S. Army Chorus. The group performs regularly for the President and visiting heads of state and at functions hosted by the departments of State and Defense. Erin Carnahan is project coordinator with Capital Strategies, Inc., a public relations and marketing communications firm in Raleigh, N.C. Jeremy Cass is enrolled in the graduate program in Hispanic Literatures at the University of Kentucky. He teaches two undergraduate Spanish courses each semester.

Mark Davis, who had been working on a partnership between the Rotary Foundation and the Adopt-A-Minefield Campaign of the United Nations Association of the United States, is now living in Las Condes, Santiago, Chile, where he is a Goodwill Ambassadorial Scholar through Rotary International District 7750. He has been accepted to the International Relations Department of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Christiana DeGregorie is studying for a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the Georgia School of Professional Psychology in Atlanta. Cassie Floyd is enrolled at the Pikeville (Ky.) College School of Medicine. Reid Hawkins works as buying manager for Pools by John Clarkson in Jacksonville, Fla. Shelby Hue is a student and graduate assistant at the University of South Carolina, working toward a master’s degree in exercise science. Craig Hunter is studying for a master’s degree in public policy at the University of Chicago, with a concentration in international development focused in sub-Saharan Africa. Whitney Jackson is a graduate student in international print journalism at American University in Washington, D.C., and will receive her master’s degree in August.

Ali Kraigsley is pursuing a master’s degree in aerospace engineering at the University of Southern California. Nicole Maglio lives in Hempstead, N.Y., and is a law student at Hofstra University. Amy Oakes of Darien, Ill., is a sales trainee with Central Steel & Wire. Nick Pennington, a graduate student in recreation and tourism management at the University of Tennessee, will intern this fall with a conventions and expositions firm in New York City. Meg Ramey is serving in Venezuela with the International Mission Board, ministering to the survivors of last year’s devastating mudslides. Kelly Robinson of Lawrenceville, Ga., is a client support specialist in the sales department of HQ Global Workplaces, Inc., an international company. Melissa Roy works for Creative Network Studios, an advertising and production company in Charlotte, N.C.

Lanie Swann is a news anchor with TACC 9 TV in Kinston, N.C. Andrea Tallent is advertising manager for the American Society for Engineering Education. She lives in Alexandria, Va. Amanda Thrasher is assistant to the director of Guarisco Gallery in Washington, D.C.

DEATHS

Edith Wilson Sterling ’24, February 14, Newberry, S.C. She was retired from teaching at Newberry High School, was former organist for Red Bank Baptist Church and was a member of the Newberry Chapter of the Eastern Star, the South Carolina Education Association and the Power House Art Center.

Oscar Hodges, Jr. ’27, December 22, Fountain Inn, S.C. He was a retired agent with Hodges Insurance Agency.
Although Life in General hasn't hit the big time, the band's easy-going style and willingness to work hard (they've performed in 46 states) have earned them a loyal fan base, particularly among twenty-somethings. They've also earned recognition. From 1995 to 2001, the National Association of Campus Activities, which helps book campus concerts throughout the country, named Life in General its "Contemporary Music Artist of the Year." The group has also made Musician magazine's list of "Top 100 Unsigned Bands."

"So Long True Love," the duo's latest CD, has sold over 4,000 copies, and more than 25,000 of the group's CDs are in circulation. Not bad, considering that you can't buy any of Life in General's six releases in most chain record stores. Almost all of them are sold at the group's concerts or through its Web site, lifeingenral.com.

Although he began playing guitar as a high school student in Winston-Salem, N.C., Chapman didn't really become comfortable on stage until he enrolled at Furman. "I found out that playing a guitar can get you girls," he says with a laugh. A philosophy major, Chapman was part of an informal group of students who performed at parties and other gatherings during his Furman days.

After graduating in 1987, he returned to Winston-Salem and joined some high school friends in forming 2lb Planet. Playing a mixture of their own music and covers of popular hits from the '60s, '70s and '80s, the foursome toured the Southeast before disbanding in 1993.

After the break-up, Chapman and Shelley Sutton, a Furman classmate and fellow Sigma Nu brother, formed Life in General and began touring to build a name and fan base. During that first year, the duo played more than 200 concerts and released LIG's first album, "Long Forgotten Toys."

But the Chapman-Sutton partnership did not last long. Sutton left the band in 1994 to pursue his own interests — the two have remained friends — and was replaced by LeVasseur.

Chapman and LeVasseur maintained an aggressive touring schedule and became a hot ticket with the college crowd while producing four CDs from 1996 to 2000. Last year, Chapman released a solo album, "Making God Laugh."

Bouncy and fun yet also reflective, LIG songs cover everything from relationships and religion to boozing with friends. While it's an acoustic band, the group has a varied and versatile sound. Some selections incorporate the violin, mandolin, harmonica and piano. Chapman and LeVasseur share vocal duties.

On the road 200 days a year, the performers recount their adventures through frequent postings on their Web site. And every day is fan appreciation day for the duo. They e-mail them, chat after the show and post fan tributes and photos on their Web page. Their fans return the affection by traveling, sometimes for hours, to hear LIG perform. And they tell their friends about the band.

"After a show people will come up and say that they saw us in college and wanted to come out again and hear our music," says Chapman. "Others will say they came out on the recommendation of a friend. Our popularity has grown from word of mouth."

Although Life in General wouldn't turn down a big record deal, Chapman says he and LeVasseur aren't obsessed with making the big time.

"We've been successful and made a career without a major record label," he says. "We've never had a grand plan to get famous. We enjoy playing music. We'll do it until it stops being fun. We are a pretty up and happy band."

— John Roberts