

4-1-2000

## Lasting influences

Will Thompson '74

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### Recommended Citation

Thompson, Will '74 (2000) "Lasting influences," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol43/iss1/9>

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# The CESC Code

I do not expect to create a perfect world, but I know that **apathy will never make anything better**; apathy will only allow us to degenerate into chaos.

I will remember that **assistance without respect is degrading to human dignity**. I will never permit my outstretched hand to become the instrument of a handout.

I will not grow weary with well-doing. Upon volunteering for a task, I pledge to **do my best to perform the task** in a cheerful and open-minded manner.

I will **take my commitment of time and service seriously**, not neglecting relationships, barring extraordinary circumstances.

## Lasting influences

The words of the CESC code guided me almost 30 years ago. They still guide me today. They come from a visionary who continues to have a huge impact on my life — Betty Alverson.

Betty believed that I could change the world. This was not some whimsical belief but a passion that has been passed on to hundreds of Furman students over the past three decades.

Let me give you one tangible example of how powerful that belief has been. In February 1973, I joined the other co-chair of Service Corps, Chris Tyler (now Chris Harrill), in the White House, talking with Pat Nixon, the First Lady of the United States!

Chris and I had been flown to Washington because CESC was one of four finalists for a national award from the National Center for Voluntary Action. We had applied for the award for very practical reasons (one of Betty's pearls of wisdom was: "Keep your eye on the vision, but take care of the nuts and bolts."). We needed the \$5,000 that went with the award to help maintain the convoy of donated vehicles that carried students to the sites where they

volunteered to tutor, mentor, supervise, or just be a caring presence to those in need.

Betty taught and embodied the belief that service to others was sacred and holy work, and that all of us could make a difference. So, standing in the White House and talking with the First Lady was not such a daunting endeavor. Betty taught me that anything is possible, and that there were no limits when it came to human need.

Those experiences continue with me to this day. For over 20 years, I have worked with people and communities as an Episcopal priest and licensed clinical social worker, helping individuals and parishes to heal and be visionaries in their own families and in the world. Recently, I have been developing a "play practice" which will help people get in touch with their creativity, playfulness and spirituality — a sort of "May Day Play Day" in the corporate world.

My faith and hopefulness continue to grow from the seeds that were planted 30 years ago.

Two of my dearest friends today are ones that I met through CESC. Polly Penland and I spent

many Tuesday nights during our freshman year listening to desperate souls on a drug-abuse hot line. We were never sure if we were being effective, but we were willing to learn and to keep trying.

Since then, we have stayed connected. I christened her daughter, Kelsey, when she was a baby. Polly is a supervisor of Child and Family Services for TREND, a social services agency in western North Carolina, where she works passionately and diligently to bring emotional, psychological and physical services to that area.

David Coleman was co-chair of CESC two years after me. He is now a clinical psychologist and corporate consultant, working primarily to help those in the legal world become effective agents for change. He lives just up the road from me in Maryland, and we get together regularly for fun and fellowship. We have always supported one another to clarify our own vision and mission in the world, and help each other claim our gifts to serve our communities.

Betty believed that we — that I — could change the world. Since



BLAKE PRAYTOR

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of CESC, alumni presented a quilt and scrapbook to Betty Alverson.



then, I have been trying to live up to that belief and to pass it on to others.

One of the quiet but effective qualities that Miss A modeled was to empower others. She was always behind the scenes, encouraging and pushing us to reach our potential. She did much of the groundwork to insure success and graciously allowed us to receive the recognition and thanks. This was not done in any kind of sacrificial manner. She just believed that there was enough to go around for everyone.

She also believed in me, and CESC allowed me to turn that belief into a reality that makes a difference. For her and for my connection with Service Corps, I continue to be deeply grateful.

— Will Thompson '74

Will (Bill) Thompson was co-chair of CESC in 1972-73. He is an Episcopal priest at The Church of St. Clement in Alexandria, Va.



BILL HENRY