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## Up Close: Goodbye's Too Good A Word

Vince Moore  
*Furman University*

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# GOODBYE'S TOO GOOD A WORD

BY VINCE MOORE

**I** never planned to stay at Furman University very long. It was 1982 and I was working as a sportswriter at the daily newspaper in Anderson, South Carolina, when somebody told me that Furman was looking for a director of its News Bureau.

I really wasn't interested in leaving the newspaper, especially after covering Clemson's 1981 national championship football season and sitting courtside for ACC basketball games featuring Michael Jordan and Ralph Sampson. But my wife, Deb, and I were recently married with our first child on the way, and I was working nights and weekends. So it seemed the Furman job could serve as a temporary reprieve from the bad hours while I calculated my next move.

Thirty-seven years later, the next move came when I decided to retire from the university at the end of August.

When I joined the University Relations office in July of 1982, it was still something akin to the dark ages of communications. There was no internet and, therefore, no email, websites, Twitter, Instagram or any other form of instantaneous communication.

A news release had to be delivered by the post office, and if the news was particularly urgent, I would jump in my car and deliver it by hand to the local media. The first great technological innovation I experienced at Furman was the fax machine, a miraculous invention that meant I no longer had to drive across town to deliver the important news of the day.



## “I LIKED MY JOB, BUT I LOVED FURMAN.”

The fax machine, of course, looks quite quaint in retrospect. When people ask me how I could have stayed in the same position for 37 years, I reply it was hardly the same job all those years. In fact, my job responsibilities changed so fast and so often after the mid-1990s that I could appreciate the plight of whoever was in charge of moving things from one place to another just prior to the invention of the wheel.

What did I experience during my time at Furman? Since I never missed a commencement, I estimate I watched 24,000 graduates receive their diplomas, starting with the class of 1983 and ending with the class of 2019. And since most of you have attended a Furman commencement at some point, you know that is not a minor time commitment.

I was there when Furman severed ties with the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 1992, and I helped roll out the news, ever so carefully, that we were no longer a dry campus. I was there when President George W. Bush spoke at the university's 2008 commencement, which was a huge story in the media and surely one of Furman's most controversial moments.

Some people, including a group of Furman professors, were mad that President Bush had been invited to speak; others were mad that anyone would complain about a visit from a sitting U.S. president; and the students were upset the drama was overshadowing their graduation. It's not often you can make everybody mad, but there you go.

President Bush was just one of many big names to visit campus during my time at Furman. Others included President Barack Obama, President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton, President George H.W. Bush, Sen. John McCain, Pat Conroy, Kurt Vonnegut, Tom Brokaw, Chuck Todd, Seth Myers and the New Kids on the Block, whose swarming teenage fans turned Paladin Stadium inside out.

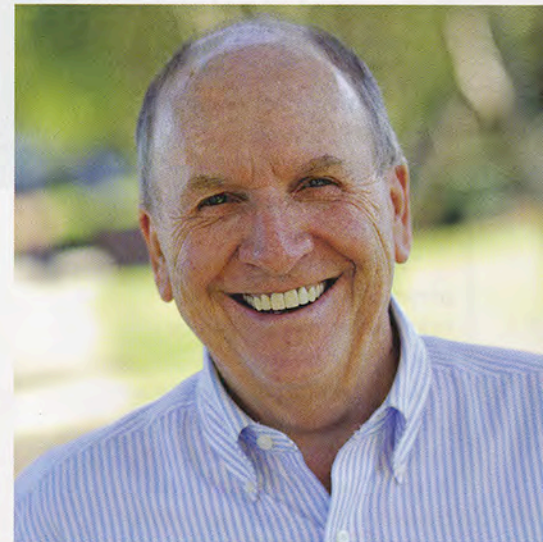
Who was my favorite? Vonnegut, without question. It was my job to set up media interviews with prominent visitors, and when Vonnegut arrived on campus, I asked if he was willing to meet with a group of reporters. He laughed and said, “With what you're paying me to be here, I'll be glad to do whatever you want me to do. Just lead the way.”

I ran into many people over the years with a lot less voltage than Kurt Vonnegut but who were not nearly as accommodating.

It's amazing how quickly the last 37 years went by. Our oldest daughter, Dustin, was just a few days old when I came to Furman. She graduated from the university in 2004 but would be the only Furman alum of our three children. Her younger brother and sister, Taylor and Madison, were quite the Paladin fans growing up, but both matriculated elsewhere after Dustin spent four years telling them how hard she had to study while at Furman.

I have watched the students in those first few graduating classes after my arrival send their children to Furman. But, as far as I know, I left the institution before anybody in the class of 1983 had a grandchild enroll at Furman. If there is an alum out there who can prove otherwise, please don't let me know!

While I will be leaving my job, I won't really be leaving Furman. You'll still be able to find me at the PAC, the Furman golf course and any number of Paladin sporting events, which may help explain why I stayed longer than I planned. I liked my job, but I loved Furman. ♦



### Bottom

*As the official scorer for the Furman men's basketball team, Moore scored the first- and second-round games at the 2017 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament in Greenville.*

