F-STOP

It has many names—the magic hour, the golden hour, l’heure bleu, the gloaming—but that interval of time when the sun lowers and the day is on the verge of night is nature’s canvas. We asked our photographer to use his camera—and its many f-stop settings—to capture that canvas as it emerged on Furman’s campus during this liminal hour, on the transition between the seasons.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEREMY FLEMING ’09
To walk—for most of us, it is one of our first laudable acts. As babies, we totter, stumble, and struggle to stay upright until that milestone moment where one foot is placed in front of the other, then again (and again), as rhythmic as breath.

It is no coincidence that many spiritual thinkers regard walking, with its similar cadence, as an outward manifestation of the breath. And like breathing, walking can feel as primal. We walk to get somewhere, we walk to leave somewhere; we walk to decipher a problem, we walk to weigh an answer.

“I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in,” said the great naturalist John Muir. Even more existential, and more sobering, is Jean Cocteau’s take on walking: “Since the day of my birth, my death began its walk. It is walking toward me, without hurrying.”

4:18 PM: Inside the famous Bell Tower in late fall, regarding time in reverse
4:19 PM: A view of the chiming bells from below as they gong within the magic hour
4:33 PM: Painting the stadium lines
WALKING IS DECEIVING: IT'S VERY MINIMALISM FRAMES ALL THAT CAN FEEL MAXIMAL IN OUR LIVES WITH RELIEVING SIMPLICITY.
How a person walks—hurried, languorous, or buoyant; in tempos that define a saunter, an amble, a trapeze, a lumber, or a strut—tells us a lot about that person. Walking is mood; it is disposition. We are as we go.

Then there are the types of walks we engage in: the dog walk, the nature walk, the walks to raise money, the walks of shame, the walks that walk the talk, the pilgrimage.

Lately, pilgrimages have become something of a minor rage, as chronicled in the books *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed (1,100 miles on the Pacific Crest Trail), *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson (the Appalachian Trail, more than 2,000 miles), or in the films *The Way* (the
Camino de Santiago) and The Revenant (America's wild frontier).

Pilgrimages, by their very definition, are spiritual in nature—the pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca or Lourdes—and are often endowed with healing, renewal, or penance in mind. No matter what the catharsis is, though, they all depend on footsteps. Imagine a pilgrimage without walking—it doesn't fit, does it? You can't quite absolve guilt or achieve renewal with a Sunday drive or a cruise around the world.

Even short walks, such as those people take through a labyrinth, may only last minutes, but because they assume the basic and redundant rhythms of right-left, right-left, they allow us to approach the complex with equanimity, to overlay what eludes us with an assured perspective that "it" will come.

Walking is deceiving: In its apparent mindlessness, it becomes a gateway to mindfulness; its very minimalism frames all that can feel maximal in our lives with relieving simplicity.

Walking need not happen in solitude, of course, but one of walking's chief pleasures is how it can bridge the worlds of intimacy and anonymity.

There's a word for this, courtesy of 19th-century French poet Charles Baudelaire, who popularized the idea of the flâneur, the "passionate spectator" or the "botanist of the sidewalk." As he explains it:

"The crowd is [the flâneur's] element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world."

4:39 PM: Bid day for sororities at Furman 5:04 PM: Game day in autumn 6:31 PM: A hidden detail in the Furman landscape 6:47 PM: Two students reconnect at Furman's fall festival 4 PM: A weekly meeting of Furman's senior leadership team
Just before we are celebrated for taking our first steps, we experience another adulation: for our first words.

Interesting, that—how language and movement are what we admire so immediately in life. Consider human existence without words; then consider it without the possibility of movement.

Words are often what give our movements meaning; movement inspires new meanings that we make sense of in words. Whether aloud or quietly to ourselves. Is it any surprise that the long march, home or away, becomes a motif in many works of literature?

Rebecca Solnit, who wrote the book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, argues that escape is one of the most significant of those motifs—in particular, for those who are downtrodden. For such individuals, walking becomes a powerful disassociation. In speaking about women in the novels of Jane Austen, Solnit writes, “Solitary walks express the independence that literally takes the heroine out of the social sphere of the houses and their inhabitants, into a larger, lonelier world where she is free to think: Walking articulates both physical and mental freedom.”

For anyone, walking can become a powerful moment of pause that we should perhaps assert more than we do. What if, before making decisions in boardrooms or living rooms, we all rose and took a walk. Would the better answers arrive better?

Scientists seem to think so. In a Stanford University study, researchers Marily Oppezzo and Daniel L. Schwartz found that walking “improves the generation of novel yet appropriate ideas, and the effect even extends to when people sit to do their creative work shortly after.”

Walking, the study showed, may help most with divergent thinking, or thinking that seeks out possibilities as opposed to choosing among predetermined ones (that ability is called “convergent thinking”).

Either way, Oppezzo and Schwartz observed that “while schools are cutting back on physical education in favor of seated academics, the neglect of the body in favor of the mind ignores their tight interdependence.” In an Information Age that fetishizes the screen but depends on creativity, that negligence might just be detrimental.

Of course, walking need not be empirically justified. Walking clears cobwebs, it invites a different kind of conversation with a companion, it sharpens our observation of the shocking quotidian—the aird perfume of woodsmoke in winter; a night sky studded with lapidary constellations; the drift of conversation from an open window as it’s passed in summer. These are necessities in their own right. So necessary that some have even bemoaned our diminished affinity for “purposeless” or “observational” walking. What we could also call, “walking just because.” This erstwhile practice, these multi-degreed
F-STOP

INTERESTING, THAT—HOW LANGUAGE AND MOVEMENT ARE WHAT WE ADMIRE SO IMMEDIATELY IN LIFE.

ENCHANTED
What happens in the magic hour is often as beautiful as the idea of a magic hour.
lamenters claim, connects us with a type of wisdom that serves no purpose but makes room for all potential ones.

A college campus—often beautiful, ostensibly an environment designed for the generation of wisdom—is precisely the kind of place that should be walked. Its quadrangles and circles and gardens and forests and lakes and lawns, not to mention its interiors—those vaulted spaces everyone knows and the nooks only we do—beg for perambulation.

On a residential campus like Furman’s, walking is actually the thing that connects the places which end up shaping us: the classroom, the dining hall, the dormitory, the field. Because walking is slower than most transportation but faster than sitting still, walking becomes the amber that encases our most arresting memories. Unwittingly, walking forms the texture beneath our memories, and when we return and walk the place again, we trace these memories in steps.

Those steps add up. That is what is beautiful about mileage, about age, about our discipline of rising and striding outward in order to summon those inward strides. We grow wiser. And ultimately, wisdom becomes its own origin of motion, propelling us ever more assuredly into steering our lives, qualifying us to be welcomed locomotion in the lives of others.

You might say the more we walk, the more we arrive at where we were always meant to go.

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5:45 PM

A luminous aura surrounds a gateway into Furman’s campus in early fall.
WALKING BECOMES THE AMBER THAT ENCASES OUR MOST ARRESTING MEMORIES. WE TRACE THESE MEMORIES IN STEPS.