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Retiring professors represent combined 107 years of service and commitment to university: Buford shared passion for critical thinking

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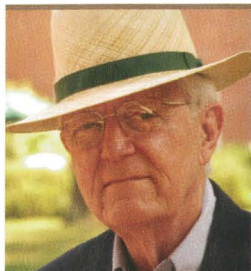
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Buford shared passion for critical thinking

As a freshman at Furman in the mid-1970s, I enrolled in Tom Buford's Introduction to Philosophy course. With his even-tempered intensity and

carefully developed presentations, Tom introduced me to what was to become my passion and eventually my career.

The general pattern of the course is still vivid. Tom would present one side of an issue in a convincing, compelling manner. The next day, we would examine the opposing position and discover there were similarly persuasive reasons for holding it.

I was profoundly impressed by this approach, because the emphasis was on learning how to think. In the courses I had later with Tom and in my work with him as a colleague, I came to see that this emphasis on teaching undergraduates how to learn was one of his passions. This same commitment surfaced regularly in department meetings, as Tom made sure that we would fully consider the educational value of any new policy or decision.

During the intro course, we addressed such topics as the philosophy of religion and the arguments for God's existence. In analyzing St. Anselm's ontological argument, Paley's argument from design, and Kant's arguments that God's existence cannot be proved, Tom's presentations were neither dogmatic lessons in rational Christianity nor calculated challenges to religious faith. They were calls to think critically about religious belief.

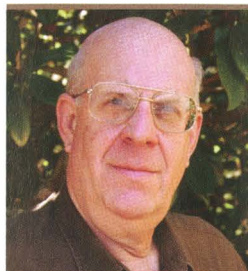
Indeed, Tom's deeply felt personal beliefs further increased the philosophical value of this work for students. His belief and commitment are reflected in his years of service to Greenville's First Baptist Church as a member, deacon and teacher, and they are evident in the book he wrote on the parables of Jesus, *Ambushed on the Road to Glory*. Tom's example has helped me and many other students to better understand how to combine deeply felt religious beliefs with a love for philosophy, when oftentimes they seem to be in tension with one another.

In addition, Tom has devoted a significant portion of his professional life to the study, interpretation and development of Personalism, an important movement in American philosophy. He has edited the *Personalist Forum*, written a book titled *Personal Philosophy: The Art of Living*, and co-edited a collection of essays called *Personalism Revisited: Its Proponents and Critics*.

Tom may be retiring after 37 years at Furman, but he is likely to rank among the busiest "retirees" around. Aside from maintaining an active intellectual life, he will no doubt continue to pursue his many interests, which range from music (he is a cellist) to flying (he is a skilled pilot and flight instructor).

I will close by wishing Tom and his wife, Dee, many more happy years of enjoying each other, and by stating that it has been a distinct privilege to have known Tom as a teacher, colleague, fellow church member, philosopher and friend.

— Mark Stone '78, *Philosophy*



Lavery a perfect fit for history department

William J. Lavery was born to be a member of Furman's history department, a department shaped by the brilliant and witty excellence of D.H. Gilpatrick and the open-

armed concern for students expressed by his protégé, Winston Babb. When Bill arrived in 1968 he showed respect for and an understanding of what his forerunners had accomplished, as well as a zeal to emulate them.

I met Bill at a luncheon for new faculty members in 1968, and for the next 38 years I watched him have a tremendous impact on students, colleagues, administrators and friends of Furman. Powered by his enthusiasm and pleasantly booming voice, he was a dynamic lecturer who used his vast and ever-growing knowledge to interest, inspire and educate.

His specialties were Russia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, but what made Bill especially successful was that he could reach out to students in a way that made each feel special. His excellence was formally recognized in 1986 when he received the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching.

Bill's appeal carried over to social occasions. He was often recruited for student events, as anyone desiring to guarantee a lively party was sure to include Bill and Ava Lavery. And although Bill can do the professorial pontification as well as anyone, he also has the sensitivity that comes only with being a sincere listener, and his concerns are genuine.

He was a trailblazer in Furman's study abroad programs. He took students to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the early 1970s when such ventures were rare, especially for small liberal arts colleges. He developed exciting academic programs that helped shape the interests and broaden the world views of students, and he was generous in recruiting colleagues to participate in and strengthen these programs. Since 1996, when he was appointed director of international education, Bill has been instrumental in bringing hundreds of eager, able and dedicated students to Furman from across the world.

The names Lavery and Block were linked throughout our years at Furman. Because we both came from Chicago, joined the same department at the same time, taught European history to many common students and shared many interests, including tossing barbs at each other, people would talk about Lavery and Block (I preferred Block and Lavery) as though we were a team.

This was always most flattering to me. Bill Lavery is the best, most successful undergraduate professor I have ever known, and he has had a life-changing impact on countless students.

As they enter retirement, Bill and Ava are building a house in Charleston, S.C. Charleston's gain will be Greenville's loss, and there will be a noticeable void at Furman activities of all kinds.

— John Block '63, *Professor Emeritus of History*