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Then: Reflection on the Importance of Furman as it was

Steve Cothran '86

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NICOLE WEYER '21

NICOLE WEYER '21 worked with and observed genetic counselors during her internship with TriHealth Hospital System. She then used her internship experiences to shape her research on human cancers and genetic testing. And what began as an internship has become a job. Weyer accepted an offer to become a genetic counseling assistant at TriHealth, which will help her as she pursues a graduate degree in genetic counseling.

WILLIE CORNISH '22 hopes to compose music for TV, film and video games. In his notes about his six-minute piece, "The Butterfly Effect," the music major studying composition cites the "metaphor of a small action, such as a butterfly flapping its wings, completely altering the direction and behavior of a large tornado/storm." Cornish's résumé lists 17 works, ranging from a West African percussion ensemble to solo guitar to a woodwind quintet.



WILLIE CORNISH '22

CALEB ROBERSON '21 spent one summer working with the Houston Astros' front office. Using his experiences at Furman, he built a predictive model to help the Astros make decisions that increase the likelihood of winning. Furman Mathematics Professor John Harris helped Roberson secure interviews with five Major League Baseball clubs. The key to landing the internship, according to Roberson, was having a portfolio. "One thing that's really helpful to get your foot in the door is to have some work you've done on your own," he said. "Without that, I don't think I would have been invited to any interviews." ♦



CALEB ROBERSON '21

THEN



STEVE COTHAN '86

Religion Professor Edgar McKnight's Charleston draw might just as well have belonged to a Lowcountry farmer.

Instead, he grew crops of Furman students who left each year more deeply rooted in their understanding of the New Testament.

In my first classroom experience – 8 a.m. Religion 11 – he highlighted our three test dates and instantly became my favorite professor after indicating we could drop our lowest grade.

Fast forward to our third test.

Weighing my solid B against a late night of studying, I exercised the preeminent wisdom only freshmen possess, congratulated myself, and slept in the next morning.

I awoke refreshed, enjoyed a leisurely shower, and strolled back toward my room around 8:15 a.m. I opened the door as the phone rang, lifted the receiver, and heard a frantic shout: "Stephen! We're having a test! Where are you?"

Panic gripped me tighter than the towel around my waist as I stammered, "Uh ... I thought we could drop our lowest test?"

"Well, you've got to have one first! Get over here!"

Had Coach Dick Sheridan clocked me sprinting across campus the great **Stanford Jennings '84**

might've ridden the bench in the fall of 1982. In mere moments, I breathlessly skidded into my seat and stared at the test.

Racking my brain for anything remotely relevant, I cobbled together a pathetic amalgam of gibberish that could only be described as a colossal waste of time. Mine and Dr. McKnight's.

When the bell sounded before I'd even seen the second page, I exhaled in disgust. There was no doubt this would be my lowest score. I sheepishly made my way to his desk mumbling, "Thanks, but I didn't finish."

"That's OK," he smiled through bushy eyebrows and thick spectacles. "Come back at 2 p.m. and you can do the essays."

To this day I wonder why I didn't say, "No, thanks!"

Almost four decades later, I know.

Edgar McKnight loved students and loved teaching because he wanted to share the truths that had been life-changing for him.

And his love was life-changing for us. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Cothran '86 is an associate pastor to students and families at Central Baptist Church in Newnan, Georgia.

EDGAR MCKNIGHT, THE WILLIAM R. KENAN JR. PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF RELIGION AT FURMAN, DIED ON DEC. 29, 2020. READ MORE ON PG. 63.