Winter Sunset, looking across Milford Mall

W. Pate
Some readers of this newsletter might wonder why a Spanish professor is writing this column. Sometimes I wonder myself! To make a long story short, at the request of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Dean, I am serving a three-year appointment as Chair of the English Department. Despite my affiliation with Modern Languages and Literatures, my connections with the English Department during my 35 years at Furman have been deep and strong. Over the years, I have collaborated with several members of the department on a variety of projects, such as *Furman Humanities Review*. In my opinion, the English Department is one of the pillars of our liberal arts curriculum. I have long admired the English faculty and their extraordinary work in teaching literature, cultural studies, linguistics, writing, and other topics to Furman students, and it’s been a pleasure to walk alongside them on their professional journeys. I am honored to serve them in my capacity as Chair.

The English Department’s tradition of excellence in teaching was enhanced during the 2015 commencement exercises when Vince Hausmann received the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching, Furman’s highest honor for teaching given to a faculty member. In 2016 the English Department again brought home the award when Willard Pate, celebrating her 52nd year at Furman, was honored.

The academic years 2015 and 2016 have been a period of transition. Gil Allen retired in 2015, and Bill Aarnes retired this year. No one can adequately fill the void that these two master teachers and writers left. They leave behind a legacy of excellence. Gil’s departure allowed us to conduct a national search for a fiction writer, and we were successful in bringing Laura Morris to campus. Laura is an experienced teacher and accomplished writer whose fiction brings to life Appalachian culture. Her most recent story, “Muddin’,” will soon appear in *Appalachian Heritage*.

Joni Tevis also continues the English Department’s tradition of excellent creative writing. Joni recently won the Pushcart Prize for her essay “What the Body Knows,” which was published in the November/December 2013 issue of *Orion* magazine. The Pushcart Prize is a major literary award that honors the best poetry, short fiction, essays and other works that appear in small presses during the previous year. Joni’s recent book, *The World is on Fire*, has received national attention and excellent reviews.

English faculty have distinguished themselves in their scholarly writing as well, publishing in top journals and contributing to scholarly books. Gretchen Braun, our Victorian scholar, has recently published articles in *Genre: Forms of Discourse* and *Culture and Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Early Modern scholar Nick Radel published several works, including chapters in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England* and in *In Crashing Cathedrals: Edmund White by the Book*. 
Michele Speitz, our Romanticism specialist, has also been a productive scholar with articles appearing in *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900: Restoration and Eighteenth Century* and in *Essays in Romanticism*.

Willard Pate’s photography book *with animals* has been recently published. This book contains pictures of animals that Willard has taken in her travels, primarily in Latin America. *with animals* will undoubtedly give Willard an even broader audience for one of her well-known passions: photography.

Nearly all faculty members in the department have been busy reading papers at conferences, undertaking significant research, and working on their scholarly agendas, with articles and books pending publication.

Current students as well as faculty have been honored for their writing. English majors at the international conference of the English honorary society, Sigma Tau Delta, held recently in Minneapolis, received high recognition. Cory Bailey (’16) presented his original short fiction “This Side of the Sea,” Shannon Young (’16) presented her critical essay “Postmemory in Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*,” and Erin Mellor (’17) presented her creative nonfiction essay “Why We Must Qualify Travel.” Out of a pool of over six hundred students from all over the United States, Canada, and even Kuwait, two of our students won top prizes. Shannon took First Place in Critical Essays: Popular Culture, and Erin won an Honorable Mention in Creative Nonfiction.

As you can see, the English Department remains a vibrant, dynamic site with great teaching, first-rate scholarship, and outstanding students. I want to thank those of you who have supported the English Department by contributing to such funds as the Crabtree-Stewart Lectureship fund, the Ann Sharp Scholarship for students interested in linguistics, and the English Special Needs Funds. Many alumni over the recent past have been extraordinarily generous in their gifts to the department, and I can assure you that the resources that you entrust to us are spent wisely. Best wishes to you all.
Bill Aarnes retired in May 2016. Bill came to Furman in 1979 to began his career as a consummate teacher of American literature, composition, and poetry.

Almost everyone who has taught at one institution for nearly 40 years probably achieves near-legendary status, and Bill was certainly no exception. Bill valued students’ successes and he delighted in their growth and achievements. He was a masterful literature and poetry teacher, but more often than not, he could be found deep in conference with a student over how best to organize a paragraph, construct an argument, or even to find just the right word to add clarity to a sentence.

Bill taught a wide variety of literature courses, but in recent years he seemed to focus more and more on environmental writing, a topic that resonated strongly with his students and Furman’s own institutional values of sustainability and ecology. It’s no exaggeration to say that some of Bill’s students in his Environmental Writing classes had life-changing epiphanies reading and writing about issues related to the environment.

Apart from Bill’s fine work as a teacher and scholar, he is a poet. Bill has published dozens upon dozens of poems that have received national recognition. He has three books of poetry: *Learning to Dance; Predicaments*; and *Do in Dour*, his most recent book, hot off the press. His poems often address different aspects of the human condition, such as love and loss. His poems might be lyrical in tone. They might be highly structured. Or they might follow a more narrative path, using carefully crafted imagery to capture a moment or two of a universal truth.

Bill’s colleagues regard him highly and with great fondness, and they stress how much Bill values friendship and collegiality. For years, a bright Christmas bag filled with a loaf of Bill’s homemade cinnamon bread has signaled the end of fall term for each of his English Department colleagues. And, every Monday, to the delight of both his colleagues and students, he filled the department candy dish. Tangible reminders of Bill’s generous spirit.

His students and colleagues will miss him.
Gilbert Allen retired from the English Department in 2015, after devoting much of his teaching life—nearly four decades—to Furman. His writing and teaching emphasize the fact that words matter. A perfect example of that is his work with Ninety-Six Press, which he founded—along with Furman professor emeritus Bill Rogers—in 1991. Together, they have kept a literary press not only alive, but thriving, for more than a generation.

There is a quietness to Gil’s character that underscores the intensity of his concentration, attention, and care. This quality is part of what makes him an excellent poet and fiction writer. Since coming to South Carolina, Gil has published six critically lauded books of poetry, including his most recent, Catma (Measure Press) and a short story collection, The Final Days of Great American Shopping (USC Press).

I am always amazed by the sheer amount of poetry that Gil has memorized. He always has, close to hand, the perfect poetry quote for any given moment. Think of the hours of quiet study that that body of knowledge speaks to, as well as to Gil’s love of language. But Gil’s passion for writing extends beyond the works of the past to his own excellent poetry and prose. When I began working at Furman, Gil tirelessly introduced me to the wider community of writers, not only in the Upstate, but the southeastern U.S. Time after time, I saw that other writers and editors—from Baton Rouge, to Athens, to Charleston and beyond—respected Gil not only for his writing, but also for his commitment to creating and supporting literary community.

Thank you, Gil, for all your contributions to Furman students over the years!
When thinking about your typical English professor’s outdoor activities, the mind probably wanders to walks through the woods or around the lake, certainly not to running marathons. Allow Dr. Morris to shatter your pre-conceptions: she ran 26 ½ miles on October 4, 2015, and has intentions to continue running distances that are challenging for most of us.

Dr. Morris began her journey to her current teaching position at Furman at Carnegie Melon University, where she earned her B.A. She received her Masters from West Virginia University before moving to South Carolina for the first time to teach at Francis Marion University in Florence, where she stayed from 2006-2010. She completed her PhD at Texas A&M.

A short fiction writer by trade, Dr. Morris has published a number of stories. At present she has completed a series about West Virginia, her home state, which will be published by West Virginia University Press. When she is not working on her own stories or hiking or running, Dr. Morris can often be found teaching writing classes at women’s prisons. While in Texas she taught creative writing classes to incarcerated women who wanted an outlet for their thoughts and feelings. “This writing,” Dr. Morris says, “became very empowering for women who have almost nothing they can call their own.”

Here at Furman Dr. Morris teaches a first year writing seminar that focuses on the reality and perception of prisons. Making cheesecake using only the ingredients the inmates are able to access is one of the class activities.

As Dr. Morris begins to settle in at Furman she has been excited to make the school her home. As an avid outdoor enthusiast, she appreciates Furman’s tree-filled campus and enjoys local attractions such as the Swamp Rabbit Trail and nearby Paris Mountain. Already she feels incredibly welcomed and is excited to get to know Furman even better.
When one walks into her office, it is fairly obvious that Mindy Friddle is still making it her own, but two things are immediately obvious. The first might not shock you: a bookshelf fully stocked with novels she has taught or read for pleasure, the mark of an English professor. The second is a vase filled with unique and beautiful feathers from a number of birds who have left these souvenirs around her home.

A Furman graduate, Professor Friddle is now teaching Journalism to students at her alma mater. An experienced writer, Prof. Friddle taught at Tri County Technical College and Greenville Technical College before returning to Furman. A published author of two novels, The Garden Angel and Secret Keepers, Professor Friddle is also an experienced journalist with roots tracing back to Furman’s Paladin.

Outside of Furman, Melinda Friddle spends much of her time enjoying the outdoors; she is a fairly avid bird watcher, leading to the collection of bird feathers. Similarly, she enjoys plant life around her house but is, of course, fond of Furman’s beautiful campus as well.

After graduating from Furman, Professor Friddle received her Masters in teaching from the University of South Carolina and her Masters of Fine Arts from Warren Wilson University. One of her main goals is to teach her students to read like writers so they can fully understand finer pieces of writing. In terms of teaching, Professor Friddle routinely expresses that she is a writer who teaches, not a teacher who writes.

As Professor Friddle spends more time at Furman, expect her office to become filled with more books, more feathers, and who knows what else as she turns Furman from the place where she graduated to the place where she teaches.
Writing with Writers is my favorite English experience at Furman. As a May Experience, it offers a low-risk, high-reward way for students to explore and refine their writing styles. I say “low-risk” because in both of my Writing with Writers courses the pressure of grading was removed. The instructors really wanted the space of the class as a whole to be safe and open for everyone to try new things, and it’s hard to jump into the deep end and experiment when you’re worried about grades. In order to counter the anxiety about grades, both instructors made clear from the first class meetings that as long as you showed up when you were supposed to, were active in the class, and stretched as a writer, you would receive a “good” grade at the end of the course. I say “high-reward” because this was a deviation from the traditional school formula of the teacher acting as an authoritative banker placing coins of prescribed knowledge into the students like compliant piggy banks. Both instructors identified their areas of expertise, explained the main theme which they would like to explore in their courses, and then asked the students how they would like to proceed. We wrote flash fiction. We tried—and were mostly flabbergasted by—lyrical essays. Some tried fiction writing for the first time. Others began delving into poetry as novices. We freely shared thoughts during the whole learning experience.

Landon Godfrey taught my first Writing with Writers course. As a poet and painter, she was adamant that writing was a multi-faceted experience. We took turns reading passages out of our favorite novel while drawing concentration spirals. We listened to K-Pop, folded origami cranes, and discussed craft. We wrote three disparate essays for homework and then were told the next day in class to combine them into a lyrical essay. Let me tell you, making a first-person personal essay about a reoccurring nightmare I had when I was a kid, an analytical essay about the feminist evolution of Taylor Swift’s lyrics, and a descriptive essay about my backyard during a sunrise come together as a cohesive unit was equal parts challenging, hilarious, and surreal. It took some scissors and whiteout, but it happened. The finished lyrical essay actually ended up being my favorite piece of writing for the whole class.

Rachel Eliza Griffiths taught my second Writing with Writers course. As a poet and photographer, she too was adamant that writing was a multi-faceted experience. She delved deeper into that idea than Landon did, however. As a class we each chose a musician or band, a color, an artist, a poet, and an element of nature. All of our writing for the course had to then incorporate something from our chosen five. We wrote poetry and took pictures. We visited Andalusia, Flannery O’Connor’s home in Milledgeville, Georgia, and explored its duende. We made lyrical videos. Most importantly, we had workshops and revised, revised, revised. Never before had revision been fun. At the end of the course we held a CLP event where everyone displayed their favorite pictures, recited a piece of their writing, and showed their lyrical video. I discovered I quite liked reciting poetry in front of a crowd. Writing with Writers made me fall in love with writing again.
Isabel Burdge preparing photographs to hang for the CLP event

Rachel Eliza Griffith chatting with Jared Buchholz before the reading

Heather Brame reading her work

Group Photo
(Left to right - front)
Carter Hunt, Heather Brame, Lucy Lansing, Isabel Burdge, Emily Matthews,
Rachel Eliza Griffiths
(Left to right - back)
Peter Knezevich, Alex Loeb, Jonathan Painter, Jared Buchholz
Events in the Lounge

When the British Isles travelers from 2013 returned to campus, they, like many before them, brought home the tradition of afternoon tea. But unlike other groups, they gathered in the English Department lounge every few weeks to relax and reminisce over “a cupa.” By the next academic year, the ritual had spread to the department as a whole and had morphed into themed celebrations. November brought a Moby-Dick party (“whenever it was a dark November in my soul, I took to the sea”); February saw Lynne Shackleford taking the part of Poe contemplating his raven; and March reminded us that Flannery O’Connor would now be in her eighties and that “a good man is still hard to find.” In addition, we had the traditional “welcome-back-to-school” September pizza party. And throughout the year we shared time with some special guests.

Joni Tevis made a Moby Dick cake

Joni cutting her cake

Michele Speitz reading from Poe

Lynne Shackleford and Edgar Allan Poe’s raven

Students and faculty enjoying the annual pizza party.
Professor Robert Smallwood, a dynamic Shakespeare scholar, whom many of you remember from your days in Stratford, was with us for a week in February.

Mr. Carson was not literally at Furman, but Mr. Alan Williams the real-life butler for Baron Vestry of Stonewall Estate in Gloustershire was in Greenville at the invitation of Computer Science Professor Kevin Treu, who introduced him to students in the English Department. During afternoon tea, Mr. Williams shared stories about working in the stately homes of England and for members of the Royal family. Fans of Downton Abbey were excited to learn that Mr. Williams is acquainted with Mr. James Edward “Jim” Carter, the stately Mr. Carson.

Two real Britshers were honored guests.
Faculty Book Releases

If you are interested, the titles below are available for purchase on Amazon or directly from the authors.

Joni Tevis

The sermons of Joni Tevis’ youth filled her with dread, a sense “that an even worse story—one you hadn’t read yet—could likewise come true.” In this revelatory collection, she reckons with her childhood fears by exploring the uniquely American fascination with apocalypse. From a haunted widow’s wildly expanding mansion, to atomic test sites in the Nevada desert, her settings are often places of destruction and loss.

Bill Aarnes

William Aarnes keeps finding the little seed words inside larger words—“the get in vegetables,” “the real in cereal”—just as his poems find the meaningful kernels inside the daily goings on of our lives. His poems are school-yard savvy and know the difference between “brains and smarts.”

Gil Allen

If you tend to be suspicious of dogma—theological, political, poetic, and quadrapedal—then Catma might be the book for you.

Willard Pate

The title, with animals, comes from a line in Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself”: “I think I could turn and live with animals …” The images were shot on travels to Brazil, Peru, Cuba, and the British Isles.
Melinda Menzer is celebrating her 21st year at Furman. Her older child, Delia, is attending Trinity University as a freshman. Her younger child, Miles, is in middle school. Melinda continues to enjoy long distance, open water swimming. This fall she completed Swim the Suck, a ten-mile swim in the Tennessee River in Chattanooga, for the second year, with Margaret Oakes as her kayaker. Melinda is looking forward to going on the English Department study away program in Fall 2017.

Jeanne Provost spent two weeks in Scotland with her husband this summer, when they visited family in Aberdeen and then hiked on the West Coast. She also tried growing lemongrass for the first time, and the wild success of this plant (it has taken over the whole garden box) has been an inspiration to learn some new Thai recipes.

As usual, Willard Pate has been traveling to photograph and to show photographs. In July, she returned to Cuba after an eleven-year absence. In October, she took advantage of fall break to fly to Berlin to the opening of a show that included some of her work. The annual London trip came next. When Furman established a chapter of a no-kill cat sanctuary, Willard was the first person to adopt two kittens. Unsurprisingly their names are Flannery and Faulkner.

Margaret Oakes has been busy with pedagogical workshops and consulting with faculty on course development since being named the Director of Writing Programs at Furman last spring. She has also continued to speak on Harry Potter and Detective Fiction at libraries throughout the state (thanks to TJ Frost Wallace!) through the South Carolina Humanities Council. Sigma Tau Delta continues its book sale and Readathon (Susanna Branyon Klingenberg and Briana Guthrie Senlando!) She is also planning the 2018 England study away trip with Dr. Kevin Treu of the Computer Science Department. When she can, she zips up to Minnesota to visit Jack, who is now a professional theater stage manager there.

After hearing for decades about how wonderful the British Isles Program is, Lynne Shackelford finally got to experience it for herself in the Fall of 2015, with 21 students, representing 11 different majors. She especially enjoyed teaching Gothic literature on site, walking the same moors the Brontes traversed, hearing tales of the criminal exploits of Dean Brodie, Robert Louis Stevenson’s inspiration for The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, while taking an eerie tour of Edinburgh’s historic Canongate Cemetery, and looking out at the port of Whitby, imagining Count Dracula’s invasion of Great Britain. Her co-director was her husband, Bruce Brown from the Economics Department—an arrangement that made for savings on hotel accommodations but also brought about a discovery of how vastly different their teaching and planning styles are. (Don’t worry—the marriage has survived.) This fall Lynne and Bruce are longing for green Irish hills and the art museums and plays of London.
It was a summer of treasure hunting for Joni, David, and Caroline. They found garnets at a rock mine up in Franklin, NC, and an ancient mastodon tooth on the sand at Folly Beach.

Nick Radel had been traveling with students. In 2015, he and Rich Leteri of the Communications Department took a group to Italy for a May X. In May 2016, the two took a group to Cuba. Nick and Jay Oney, of the Theatre Arts Department, co-directed the Fall Term program in the British Isles in 2016.

Over the summer Michele Speitz traveled to Sequoia National Park with her one-year-old daughter, Charlotte. Michele took Charlotte on daily hikes in an external frame backpack. When not engrossed in the art of touching the bark of big trees, Charlotte enjoyed playing in alpine meadows and splashing around in the glacial runoff waters that pour through the creeks and rivers of the High Sierra Mountain Range.

Shane Herron visited his hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico, this summer. During the trip he took his son Alex for his first ride on the Sandia Peak Tram and visited Santa Fe. They also ate all the New Mexican food they could.
Whenever we members of the English Department faculty meet prospective majors – those people who seem to have a passion for reading and writing – we often encounter resistance to our suggestions that they sign up with us. “But what can I do with an English major?” “I really want to major in English, but my parents won’t let me.” “I plan to go to law school, so I have to major in political science.”

We, of course, always counter with, “You can do anything you want to do with an English major” and then launch into the benefits: the increased ability to think and write clearly, the fact that business executives are crying out for employees who can communicate effectively, the lifelong intangible value of exploring the human experience through literature.

Our powers of persuasion sometimes work -- or at least give a boost to those fence-sitters who need a bit of a push if they are to join us. Like faculty in English departments at other colleges and universities throughout the US (and I’ve encountered some in the British Isles as well), however, we don’t persuade as many as we would like. Yet despite the national trend away from English and the humanities in general, we manage year after year to have a solid, though small, group of majors devoted to the discipline.

And they all manage to find employment or enroll in graduate programs. They become lawyers (even without a political science major), physicians, social workers, Peace Corps volunteers, bankers, writers, editors, and high-school teachers. Zach Treu even landed a job at National Public Radio. Some graduates like Bryan Betts (2015) former editor of the Paladin and aspiring journalist explore a bit. After graduation night, Bryan packed up his car and headed across country to see the sights and to see where he might land a job. He got as far as Alamogordo, New Mexico, where he signed on with the local newspaper for several months before he was notified that he had won a Fulbright Fellowship to South Korea.

We want to continue to encourage students to major in English, and we want to reassure them about employment opportunities after graduation. Hopefully, you graduates can help us. As many of you may know, Furman’s Career Services Office has in the past few years made an effort to connect current students with alumni in hopes of establishing a network that can benefit both employers and those seeking employment. We in the English Department would like to establish our own “English Majors Network” and have included the link to a form here that we hope you will fill out and submit to us.

https://furman.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_afJPCf9rUvliEkZ
Surrounded by friends and family, Associate Professor of English, Dr. Vincent J. Hausmann, passed away January 9 after a protracted illness. Vince was co-editor of *The Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature* from 1989 until his passing, author of *Cinema, Technologies of Visibility, and the Reanimation of Desire* (Palgrave 2011), and a writer of essays for top film studies journals—including the internationally respected, *Camera Obscura*, which published two of his articles.

Vince came to Furman in 1999, and quickly established himself as one of the top teachers in the English Department and the humanities. Respected for his courses in contemporary cultural, psychoanalytic, and queer theories, Vince was uniquely gifted in preparing students for graduate study both in and outside programs in English literature. He was a tireless advocate for students seeking careers in the arts, media, and teaching, and was praised frequently by his students for providing life-altering perspectives on the world and themselves. On hearing the news of his death, a former student wrote, “He pushed his students to deepen their critical thinking and see differently. . . His investment in his students did not end once we left the classroom”; another said, “He encouraged me to believe in myself and to think big. . . . I’ll miss how he always encouraged me to be better”; and one other, addressing Vince's still-hovering spirit directly, wrote, “You expected a level of thoughtfulness and rigor from your students that I had not seen before, and have not seen since.”

Vince won the Alester G. Furman Jr. and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching in 2015.

Among his many other accomplishments at Furman, Vince was instrumental in establishing the Film Studies minor, which he chaired until his illness intervened, and he played a crucial role in transforming Furman's concentration in Women's Studies into the present Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor. Vince was extraordinarily active in Furman's CLP program, where his work gave significant visibility and intellectual respectability to LGBTQ issues that were then (and perhaps remain) inadequately represented in Furman's curriculum and on-campus life.

One obvious sign of his brilliance, and a key indicator of his importance to the program in the humanities at Furman, Vince became a go-to authority and resource on contemporary theory for his colleagues on the faculty.

He is, and will be, sorely missed.