WHAT'S NEW WITH PHILOSOPHY?

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Dear Friends of the Furman Philosophy Department,

Well, it’s that time again. Another year has passed and the leaves are just beginning to turn from green to the variety of colors we associate with the Fall. Cinnamon brooms are for sale in the grocery stores, firewood is beginning to show up outside Home Depot, and we are all trying to remember if “It’s the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown” is available on Netflix.

As the “farmer’s markets” give way to “fall festivals,” it is also time for another update from the Furman Philosophy Department. And, along with the Newsletter come the exciting Furman homecoming festivities (October 18-19, 2019). From the Friday Carnival to the Saturday game, it will be a time to look back and remember the glory of days past and the promise of days yet to come. In particular, we look forward to seeing you all at the Philosophy Tailgate prior to the Homecoming game. Please join us (from 11:00am to 1:00pm) for food, fun, and fellowship as we prepare for what is sure to be an amazing performance by the nationally ranked Paladins!

As usual, there is a lot going on in the department. Dr. Sarah Worth is currently on a well-deserved year-long sabbatical having just completed her tenure as department chair. The new department chair, Dr. Erik Anderson, is doing an amazing job taking up the mantle of leadership. Dr. David Gandolfo has just returned from his own sabbatical and continues to make the Poverty Studies minor one of the most popular minors on campus. Dr. Carmela Epright is in the middle of teaching her nationally-recognized clinical medical ethics course all while being the primary investigator on a significant grant project. Dr. Mark Stone is doing amazing work helping the department find new ways to become engaged with the Furman Advantage. Dr. Eiho Baba is working on a variety of research projects and getting our students this semester especially excited about the debates in analytic metaphysics. Dr. Aminah Hassan-Birdwell is on a prestigious year-long post-doc fellowship at Columbia University where she is Associate Director of the Center for New Narratives in Philosophy. Moreover, the department is blessed to have Dr. Darren Hick back again this year and he is preparing to offer what looks like one of the coolest classes of all time this Spring: “Philosophy of Horror.” And Sandi Annone, continues to keep us all moving in the right direction by providing support and encouragement to the entire Furman philosophy community.
From The Editors

(continued)

In a reminder of the importance that time plays for the task of meaning-making, our kids are continuing to grow up (way too fast!) and facing their own challenges and opportunities. For some of us (Mark) they are all out of college, well into their careers, and having kids of their own and some (Erik) have them just beginning their college journey. For the rest of us, we are still navigating the joys and struggles of public school, afterschool programs, and community involvement. Yet, for us all, time continues to move forward, thus allowing for beauty and growth to occur.

This year was also a reminder of the fact that time brings with it sorrow and loss. One of the founders of the current Furman Philosophy Department, Dr. Tom Buford, passed away last November. As something of a testament to his continuing legacy, our focus in the newsletter this year is on the lives of our former and current students. We have tried to highlight the range of careers, graduate degrees, and other activities in which they are engaged. In line with the priorities of the Furman Advantage, the Department is committed to facilitating lives of meaning and joy for our students as they transition from college to career (in whatever form that takes for each of them). Accordingly, we hope that they all end up living lives that are as impactful on the world as Dr. Buford’s was on all of ours.

Don’t forget that if you would like to support the current generation of Furman students in their philosophical activities, please donate to the “Furman Philosophy Special Needs Fund.” Your support is crucial to the continued thriving of our department.

We have worked hard on the Newsletter and we hope you enjoy it. Our main hope in doing it every year is that it facilitates continued engagement and ongoing relationships for all of you with the Department. As such, please take the time to reach out to us however works best for you. You can join the “Friends of Furman Philosophy Department” Facebook group, drop an email to any of us, or hopefully, stop by the Homecoming Tailgate.

On Behalf of the Department,
Aaron Simmons
Sandi Annone
Philip Reed '15
I graduated with a double major in Music Composition and Philosophy. Immediately after Furman, I went on to get a Master's in Choral Conducting from UGA in 2017. For most of the past year I have been living in Taiwan and training in Chinese martial arts. In August, however, I moved to Tokyo and have started a two-year master's program in Japanese Culture Studies at International Christian University. I am researching the chant tradition of Japanese esoteric Buddhism, focusing especially on the Shingon branch based at Mt. Koya. I am currently doing comparative culture course work and improving my Japanese in preparation for fieldwork at Mt. Koya next year. This research is a continuation of sorts of my prior research in Gregorian chant and Catholic ritual culture, and I am drawing heavily on the philosophical grounding in East and South Asian philosophy I gained at Furman. I’m very grateful to my Furman philosophy professors for getting me where I am now!

Stephen M. Crotts '72
At the ripe age of 70, after a career as an evangelical Presbyterian minister, I now find myself teaching 200 distinguished visiting Chinese professors each year what a Christian worldview looks like along with its intellectual underpinnings. They are in residency at UNC, Duke and State. They are curious and come athurst for meaning beyond materialism. Everything I have learned over the years is called upon to do this--apologetics, epistemology, history, dialog, listening, arts, political science, comparative religion....What a joy in the last chapters of my life! I learn so much from them, and trust they gain value from me as well.
John Weatherford '73
I am continuing to produce documentaries down in the Atlanta area and 2019 has been a pretty good year for awards so far. In January, I was inducted into the Georgia Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame at the University of Georgia in Athens and earlier this month, I was inducted into the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Southeast Chapter's Gold Circle here in Atlanta. In between, I was nominated for two Emmys and won two Bronze and one Silver Telly Award for my recent documentary, The Wanderer. I've just begun work on a new documentary about the Jewish Georgia colonists.

Links for Gold Circle:
https://www.southeastemmy.com gold-silver-circle
https://www.facebook.com search top q southeast 20emmy20awards epa SEARCH BO

Links for the Georgia Association of Broadcasters 2019 Hall of Fame:
https://www.gab.org 201 -hall-of-fame-inductee-john-weatherford-iii/
https://www.gab.org tag hall-of-fame

Amy Bedinghaus '09
My husband (Cary) and I welcomed a new baby on July. His name is Rowan John Hall Bedinghaus.
Emma Gibson '17

I just started my first semester of architecture school at Clemson University. It is extremely difficult but my philosophy degree is coming in handy already. Our first semester studio projects are all centered around Plato's allegory of the cave and designing spaces for philosophers!

Richard Burnette '04

I am a graduate with a Business Administration and Philosophy degree. I was 34 years old when I became a full-time day student. I currently hold a position as an Army Reserve Administrator with the Department of Defense in Greenville, SC. I am married with a 7 year old son who just started second grade.

George Singleton '80

My last book of stories, Staff Picks, from LSU Press came out in 2018. In September 2020, I will have a book coming out called You Want More: Selected Stories.
Susanna Botkin –

When did you graduate from Furman and what is your favorite memory from your time here?
I graduated in 2015! One of my favorite memories was taking Logic over the summer with Dr. Stone - we had a good class and then afterwards I had the rest of the day free, which was nice because I got to head straight to where the equestrian team practiced and ride for a bit. I also remember re-reading Broom of the System in a hammock by the amphitheater and I miss that repetition.

Upon graduation what would you say your plans were for your career?
To be completely honest I didn't have a plan - I was overwhelmed by the entire concept of entering the job market. I had applied for a few things here and there but looking back I'm not sure what I was thinking. It would have been nice to have gotten my act together and found something in Greenville so I could have continued to help with the equestrian team, but then I probably wouldn't be where I am now.

Did those plans need adjusted as things progressed?
Absolutely! About a week after I graduated and moved back to Florida, I accidentally (almost) got an interview at a law firm to be an electronic file clerk. I didn't even bring my resume to the interview - I made a lot of rookie mistakes when I first entered the job market. They did hire me, but after one of the senior attorneys told me that that firm was a long, painful grind to nowhere, I left. That experience did, however, help me determine that law school wasn't in my future!

You worked for a while in journalism and wrote for a magazine: can you talk a little bit about that experience? What did you learn in that role and how has it helped you move forward?
I was hired to be the receptionist at a yachting magazine - their headquarters are in Fort Lauderdale - but after the editor noticed me reading all the time during work she asked if I wanted to maybe write some articles for the magazine. (I don't recommend reading when you're at work, but I've never regretted it since that phone would only ring once or twice a day. There wasn't a ton to do.) Anyway, soon she had me transferred to the editorial department and I loved the work! I helped manage our team of freelancers, wrote one to two articles myself per issue, and got to travel to a bunch of different places to do research. The role helped me to feel more confident interacting in a professional setting with a wide variety of people and I loved gaining that experience as well.

How did you end up in insurance? Do you find opportunities to incorporate your philosophy training in your current work?
So I was at lunch with a friend and ran into one of the hiring directors for State Farm. He knew my father, and encouraged me to look at the job board after I revealed to him I wasn't earning a living wage at the magazine. I never wanted to be accused of having a job I hadn't earned so I asked him about any starter positions. I ended up moving to Atlanta to work in the call center, and after a year of hard work there I was promoted to my current role in Indiana, which shocked me since my current role is many job grades higher than my last. Now I'm an agency field specialist and I get to help our
agents with any problems they're having, whether it be with technical knowledge, procedural issues, or team member staffing. It's nice because we all have very solid relationships and I do my best to help them in a bunch of different areas - although sometimes I end up feeling more like a therapist than a field specialist! I try to incorporate some philosophic themes in my work with my agents - I think I quoted Rilke a few times in an email when everyone was complaining about a software update. It seemed appropriate.

What advice would you give to current students for approaching the transition from college to career?

Fix your resume! Instead of listing what you did in a job, list how that job helped you develop skills, achieve goals, etc. Once I did that and got my cover letter writing process down, I was getting interview requests for almost every job I applied for. Some of those articles about resume writing are full of terrible advice. I read a blog called "Ask a Manager" and it's full of solid professional advice and always keeps me grounded.

Susanna Botkin '15
Sarah Wood –

Description of Design Project (pictured here)

In Chilean culture, there is a myth of a ghost ship, El Caleuche, which carries the souls of all that have drowned at sea. It sails near the coast of Chiloe, a small island off of the coast of Chile. Through intricate and detailed hand lettering, this bottle of Pisco tells the story of El Caleuche. Every aspect of the bottle is inspired by imagery of El Caleuche and the stories that have been passed down through generations. The lettering itself takes the form of a sail.

When did you graduate from Furman and what is your favorite memory from your time here?
I graduated from Furman in 2017. I don’t think I could choose one single favorite memory, but rather a collection of memories and experiences due to constantly being surrounded by my best friends in the world and most valuable mentors. Having my community within a mile of me at all times is my favorite memory.

During your senior year, how did you approach the difficult task of figuring out your next steps after graduation?
This question makes me laugh. My approach was quite unorthodox, yet at the same time, probably relatable to most. Almost my entire life and entire Furman career I planned to go to medical school. I was perfectly on track to make this happen until, second semester of my senior year, I decided the current climate of the medical field no longer appealed to me. Frankly, the thought of going to medical school for the next (what felt like) bajillion years of my life made me feel miserable. This was one of the most difficult decisions I have made to date. It’s not easy to step off of a clearly-defined life path and watch all of your friends be accepted to medical school. With no plan and no clue what to do next, Professor McClain told me, “Sarah Wood, you’re going to Portfolio Center.” So, I took a leap of faith and I became a designer. So far, so good, I guess.

As a philosophy major, how did you get into the design field?
Well, I never intended to do philosophy professionally. I stumbled upon philosophy as a freshman and decided I liked it because it taught me how to think, solve problems, and ask the right questions. I felt at home in the philosophy department, and the practice of constantly questioning myself, my beliefs, and the world around me made me a better person. Luckily, in retrospect, I couldn’t have chosen better training for becoming a designer.

Tell us a little bit about the program you did in Atlanta.
Portfolio Center is a two-year professional portfolio development program. All classes are taught by industry professionals, and class is run like an agency. Every week we present our work. If you don’t have all of your work, you don’t get to present. It is rigorous. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve started class at 5:30 am, finished class 10 pm, then had 300 sketches due the next day. At the end, we create physical portfolio books of our work. The training itself is deeply philosophical in nature. I’m talking multiple 6 am 3-hour long lectures on Paul Rand and the five tenants of philosophy.
How do you see philosophy and design thinking to be resources for each other?

Design is a plan to create. The most successful projects are a meticulous balance of ethos, logos, and pathos. All three, coming directly out of your personal values, interpreted logically, and imbued with great passion. When you approach design this way, you aren’t limited to reacting to current culture. Rather, you push the paradigm and make the value of the design a moral transaction.

I watched a couple episodes from the new season of Abstract: the Art of Design on Netflix last night. In the second episode, Neri Oxman, architect and designer at the MIT Media Lab, says, “I think design is the practice of letting go, in the similar way in which Thoreau and the transcendentalists let go of all that is unnecessary.” One of the most difficult tasks in design is to let go of your preconceptions in solving a problem, to not limit yourself to reacting to current culture, to think not of what has been, but what could be. As designers, we want to make something better than it was before, and typically this involves simplification: stripping away all that is unnecessary.

Design is visual problem solving. It is asking questions. It is asking yourself if you’re asking the right questions, then asking more questions. Sound familiar? It is asking yourself if any of your solutions are even solving the problem at hand. As a young designer, I feel a great moral responsibility to create meaningful and worthwhile work. We, as a society, have produced enough meaningless content and poorly-designed products. Literally everything around us, that we interact with every single day, has been designed in some way. Design is engrained our life experience so deeply that we don’t even notice it’s there. That’s a lot of power. Power to change culture and solve the world’s most deeply-rooted problems.

What are your current plans moving forward in the coming years?

Ask me again in two months. Maybe then I’ll be employed. Regardless, I plan to continue learning and cultivating my skills as much as possible. Produce a lot of work. Some of it will be good. Most of it won’t be. That’s part of the process.

What advice would you give to current students for approaching the transition from college to career?

Don’t compare yourself or your plans to what everyone else is doing. Comparison is difficult to escape at Furman. As cliché as it sounds, there are so many different paths you can take, and not all of them are clearly defined. Don’t limit yourself to the obvious path. Do something you’re excited about. Also, hug your friends a lot. Pretty soon, you might only see them once a year.

Sarah Wood '17
Tell us a little bit about your graduate school experience. When did you graduate from Furman? Where did you go? Where are you now?

I graduated Furman in 2016 and started my masters in Philosophy (and cognitive science) at the University of Colorado Boulder the following year. I graduated from that program in 2018 and started my PhD at Washington University in St. Louis the following year. I am now in my second year (of six) in the Philosophy, Neuroscience, and Psychology program here.

You went directly from college to graduate school. Tell us a little bit about how you came to that decision while finishing up at Furman. In retrospect, are you happy with that choice? Would you have done anything differently if you could do it again?

When I was finishing up my time at Furman, I was worried that I would lose motivation if I didn’t begin graduate school immediately. I think this was the right decision for me, but I don’t think it is the right decision for everyone. I am correctly in my 8th year of taking courses (4 years in undergrad, 2 years in the masters and now my 2nd year in the PhD) and am excited to move on to a different stage of my education. A continuous 8 years of coursework can be a challenge!

What surprised you the most about graduate school? How do you think your Furman education prepared you for it?

I was very surprised by the disinterest in continental and nonwestern philosophy within the graduate programs I have attended. I have worked to try to offer opportunities for students (and professors) to engage with these ideas. Having learned from some amazing scholars in these areas, I was well equipped to bring these ideas to my friends and professors in a way they were likely to take seriously. Of course, this does not always go well, but I find that many people are willing to engage when they are offered explanations of the views in the terms more familiar to traditional analytic philosophy.

I was also surprised at the level of independence required of graduate students in the programs I have attended. Very rarely have my professors engaged in extensive lecture on the material. Instead, professors often assume that the students have fully understood the material on their own before coming to class. Although this was initially very surprising, I quickly realized that I had been taught by some of the best! My undergraduate education prepared me in many ways – I was capable of reading and understanding a wide variety of complicated works as well as engage with those works in a way that prepared me for complex discussions on difficult readings. I do not mean to suggest I have never felt lost or confused – in fact, I have felt quite confused for much of my four years in graduate school – but I am capable of figuring things out on my own when necessary. This I attribute to my undergraduate experience.
What advice do you have for current philosophy majors thinking about going to grad school?
I think you will probably hear this from others, but - research, research, research! Reach out to philosophers whose work you like and respect and see if they are willing to chat with you. Reach out to graduate students and hear their opinions about the faculty at their university – is the person you like interested in taking on graduate students? Are they easy to work with? How open are they to disagreement from their students? I underestimated the importance of these factors as an undergraduate because I was so focused on getting in to a program. Feeling satisfied about your graduate program is a huge part of your ability to succeed in that program, so try to find a program that is likely to be satisfying for you!

Is there anything else that you would like to take the opportunity to say to current students? You got this! Furman is quite hard – but in the end, you will be prepared for whatever life throws your way.

Emma Gibson – “Life After an MA”

Tell us a little bit about your graduate school experience. When did you graduate from Furman? Where did you go? Where are you now?

I graduated from Furman in 2017 with a degree in Philosophy. I began a two-year M.A. program in Religion and Culture at the University of Alabama in Fall 2017. My grand plan was to graduate and then go get a PhD in philosophy, but I changed course during my second year of my M.A. and applied to architecture school. I am currently in a three-year Master’s of Architecture program at Clemson University.

You went directly from college to graduate school. Tell us a little bit about how you came to that decision while finishing up at Furman. In retrospect, are you happy with that choice? Would you have done anything differently if you could do it again?

I never considered a gap year because I was scared of not having a plan after graduation. I ended up being pretty burnt out early on into my program and I regretted not taking time off, but I adjusted by the second semester. I don’t think I would change anything if I could because it got me where I am today. Just take some time to think about what you need before you commit to a school.

I highly recommend applying to programs while you are at Furman instead of doing it on your own after you graduate. Having professors there to answer questions, edit personal statements, and help form a plan makes the application process manageable. If you get into a school you love and decide you need a gap year, you can always defer. I know some professors will tell you it’s a bad idea but don’t listen to them.

What surprised you the most about graduate school? How do you think your Furman education prepared you for it?
It may have been my program, but I was shocked at how much control I had over my research. I had broad guidelines for papers and presentations but, for the most part, I could take my arguments in directions I found interesting. It kept me engaged and excited about the work I was doing.

**What advice do you have for current philosophy majors thinking about going to grad school?**

Furman prepared you. Don’t worry. If you are even remotely interested in going to graduate school, apply. It's intimidating and exhausting but it is so much fun. Also, I’m pretty sure my M.A. got me into architecture school because I’ve never taken an architecture class in my life. So even if you don’t pursue a career in your graduate field of study, other professions and fields find it valuable.

**Is there anything else that you would like to take the opportunity to say to current students?**

Post grad is really sad and you’re going to miss your Furman family A LOT but it gets better.

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Caley Howland – “Life After an MA”

**Tell us a little bit about your graduate school experience. When did you graduate from Furman? Where did you go? Where are you now?**

I graduated from Furman in Spring 2015. After that I attended Northern Illinois University's Masters Program in Philosophy. After that I went on to do a PhD in Philosophy at Rutgers University, where I am currently in my third year. I study philosophy of language, semantics/pragmatics, and cognitive science. I am broadly interested two aspects of language: (i) how communication happens amid the vast array of false beliefs people have about the world and errors we all make in conversation, and (ii) language acquisition - how an infant goes from non-verbal to (approximate) fluency in a language in less than 5 years (a remarkable skill no adult can replicate)!

**You went directly from college to graduate school. Tell us a little bit about how you came to that decision while finishing up at Furman. In retrospect, are you happy with that choice? Would you have done anything differently if you could do it again?**

I applied to graduate school my last year of undergrad because I had discovered aspects of philosophy I loved but hadn't had the space or time in undergrad to explore fully. I knew I liked working on feminism and ethics (from many fabulous Furman philosophy classes and discussion on the subject), but I realized my final year at Furman (through thesis work with Carmela Epright) that I also loved the study of language and philosophy of language. What spurred me to go to graduate school was the desire to learn more about the study of language, logic, information, and cognitive science. At the end of the day, I wasn't done learning in an academic setting - graduate school provided me a place to do more of that better. I think this was the right choice for where I was at the time. If I could do it again, I think I would apply to more Masters programs out of undergrad and fewer PhDs. I found going to a Masters program prior to my PhD very helpful - it expanded my base of knowledge in philosophy and gave me more time to refine my interests and affirm that I did want to pursue a PhD. It would have been nice to have a wider array of Masters options to consider (though I think NIU was the best fit for my personality and interests).
What surprised you the most about graduate school? How do you think your Furman education prepared you for it?

I think what has surprised me the most is that the amount of intellectual labor one has to do makes it really crucial to know how to manage your time. It is really important to schedule time to work and time to relax. The further into grad school I have gotten the more important this time management has gotten. I think being a double major (music/philosophy) as well as working during the last three years of college helped prepare me for this, as that required pretty extensive time management. However, I'm not sure Furman necessarily prepares you in this way - it probably depends on your circumstance.

What advice do you have for current philosophy majors thinking about going to grad school?

Funded masters programs are a great way to get a taste of graduate school to see if a PhD is something you might be interested in pursing without diving in head-first. I'm a big advocate of funded masters programs (I'm much more hesitant about unfunded ones). However, I also think it's important to recognize that graduate school sometimes isn't the path to head down, even if you love philosophy. There are a whole bunch of cool ways to continue to do philosophy (i.e. non-profit work, pre-college teaching, law, journalism, etc.). Graduate work isn't required and it certainly isn't the "best" or most "successful" of the options. You should pursue what interests you, but crucially do it in the setting that best fits you!

Is there anything else that you would like to take the opportunity to say to current students?

Don't do all and only work in college. I did too much work - have some hobbies, take free time seriously. Learning to build in free time later in life is much harder than starting off with good work/play habits. In a similar vein, learning to procrastinate well has been one of the best things I've learned since undergrad: http://www.structuredprocrastination.com/

Jocelyn Boulware – “Life After an MA”

Tell us a little bit about your graduate school experience. When did you graduate from Furman? Where did you go? Where are you now?

I graduated from Furman in 2017 and began the Master of Divinity program at Vanderbilt University later that year. Early into my program, I decided that a two-year Masters program would be better suited for my academic and professional goals so I switched to the Master of Theological Studies program and I graduated this past May. I describe my theological training as, largely, a training in Value Theory, Discourse Studies, and Social Justice. I am shifting my academic and professional focus to classroom spaces, particularly the praxis of pedagogy that is grounded in the tenants of preaching theory. I was able to imagine and begin to codify my own pedagogical strategy which has its roots in Political Philosophy. Currently, I am exploring professional opportunities in that and related arenas.
You went directly from college to graduate school. Tell us a little bit about how you came to that decision while finishing up at Furman. In retrospect, are you happy with that choice? Would you have done anything differently if you could do it again?

Shortly after I began the program at Vanderbilt, I scheduled a meeting with our then Academic Dean (who is also a Furman alum!) and she asked me a question I consistently return to: Is this what you want or are you getting caught in the momentum? I, along with so many others my senior year, was trying to find my post-grad adventure and graduate school just sounded like the fitting thing to do. If I were to answer the Dean’s question, I would have said, “yes and yes.” I went to graduate school on the suggestion of professors whose opinions I value. Kierkegaard is correct in that we must live forward to understand backward so I am grateful for my decision and the friends and insights and opportunities I have gathered along the way. Would I have done it again the same way? Yes. Only by making that choice do I now realize that applying and enrolling directly into a PhD would have only been me being caught in the momentum. I am in a place of discernment, following the suggestion of Howard Thurman and finding me what makes me come alive, something that would not have been possible without going to Vandy.

What surprised you the most about graduate school? How do you think your Furman education prepared you for it?

The expenses are shocking, especially in larger or growing cities like Nashville. Massive student loans are a looming reality for many people our age. Talking money is difficult, yet is a necessary component of discerning grad school options. I think some of the best resources Furman gifted me are the faculty members in our department who are willing to engage in these “real world” conversations. The nuance which with I was able to have these theoretically and materially grounded considerations prepared me to make wise financial decisions that will definitely help as I navigate the rest of my life with student debt that is not nearly as high as some of my grad school peers.

What advice do you have for current philosophy majors thinking about going to grad school?

Let yourself be human as you navigate this process. So often we get caught up the capitalistic machine that has, begrudgingly, infiltrated the academy. It can cripple us by telling us that we have to be The Best. Always. Always at the top, always the smartest in the room, always marks everyone as competition and not moving, breathing wells of wisdom, always the most exhausted as if to signal how consumed we are in the work. I am not saying not to operate in excellence. I am saying to take care of yourself. One of my greatest friends I met in graduate school (her name is Chelsea Brooke) once told me that, “your dopeness flows from your wellness.” So be as well—mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially, socially—as you can in this process. See #5 below: don’t be afraid to fail, don’t be afraid to take time to heal, ask for help, ask questions, set your boundaries, and stand firm in your being whole.

Is there anything else that you would like to take the opportunity to say to current students?

Failure is a gift if you let it be. It can actually be the thing that reminds you how you have overcome, how you have operated with grit and tenacity, and how to muster up the ability to keep going and not give up. A Furman degree will open many doors and still may not open some of the ones you want, you need, or that you deserve. Remembering who you are, that you are more than your stats and grades, will allow you to keep walking to make that door open, to shatter that ceiling, and bring others with you along with the way.
After graduation, I am planning on attending the University of Notre Dame. The current plan is to complete the one-year MSM program in the Mendoza School of Business while playing my fourth year of eligibility on the baseball team.

My favorite memories during my time at Furman have been the conversations with professors and fellow students as we contemplate the questions that keep us up at night.

John Michael Bertrand  
Furman University 2020

After graduation, I plan on putting my Philosophy major to use by finding a nice rock by an isolated lake to sit on and think about life. Okay, although that's obviously a joke, I do intend on continuing to develop my deep thinking skills that philosophy has helped nurture. I hope to accomplish that by directing my attention to problem-solving across cultures for a year abroad. Using this time to enhance my skills and mature out of college, I will reflect on a possible future in philosophy graduate school.

My favorite memory from my time at Furman has to be the first time I did Summer Orientation. The fun and inclusive environment that O-Staff fosters made me realize all of my favorite things about this place after my first year. It was during this time that I made my life's best friends and grew into the person I would become at Furman.

Ben Davids  
Furman University 2020
After graduation, I'm planning on trying to do community level work on environmental issues before going for a Masters of Public Policy, with a focus on Environmental Policy (depending on how things go, this could also be an Environmental Law degree.) I want to be involved in government at the city or countywide level to start with, and then see where I go from there.

My favorite memory at Furman has probably been going on the Tocqueville Retreat at Lake Lure in North Carolina, where we discussed Plato, Freire, and Levin on the liberal arts education.

Ben Wirzba
Furman University 2020

After Furman I am planning to work for a year or two, ideally under a Publishing Company or Law Firm. In that time I hope to hone in on / find my passion and eventually pursue a Masters Degree or J.D. As of now, I will be going home to Massachusetts, although I would love to travel and try out almost any location.

My favorite memory at Furman has been living in North Village with three of my best friends. Having an unyielding support system and hours of laughs waiting for me at the end of each day has made senior year incredibly rewarding and memorable.

Abbey Morelli
Furman University 2020
After graduation, I plan to attend a masters program for higher education administration! Stay tuned!

As I think back on my time at Furman, my favorite memory has got to be when the solar eclipse happened during my sophomore year. It was so powerful to stand with all of my closest friends and watch as one of the most incredible natural phenomena occurred right in front of our eyes. I even felt sort of unity with a certain celestial body. Much like the moon, I also like to stand in front of my hotter friends and dramatically become the center of attention. It was an out of body experience for me!
Where Are They Heading?

Like the Socratic "I know that I know-not," I too simply know that my future is 'up in the air' as of now. It's Monday, October 7, and through this day I have: applied for the Peace Corps, partially filled out a Teach For America application, and missed the first deadline for City Year... This, though, is the direction I find myself moving in currently. No graduate school, no teaching tennis, and no post-graduate studies are immediately following my graduation. The future is my oyster, so wish me luck!

The sea of my Furman memories is a dense one, and impossibly difficult to swim through. There, in the distance, is an uninhabited island where I will rest: the memory I now choose to share... My freshman year I was introduced to Phi-House (Philosophy Club) after declaring my major in Philosophy. The first meeting I attended was an outing to the local Kava Bar beside Bob Jones University. I was very new to the group, though was accepted quickly by everyone (including alumni Maya and Emma, and Dr. Stone!). I loved the Kava, and drank everyone's share as well as my own. I was - quite literally - juiced up on the Kava, and everyone thought it was hilarious! Imagine this small, loud new freshman among intelligent philosopher seniors - and Dr. Stone - pulling glasses of Kava-concoctions into his nest of empty receptacles, drinking every last sip, then crying some nonsensical gibberish. It was, and still is, my favorite Phi-House memory, that never need repeat itself.

Noah Levine
Furman University 2020
I am a senior pursuing a bachelor of arts in music and philosophy. While my love for viola began at age 11, I have only recently devoted myself to philosophy in order to understand the knowledge and power of mankind. These two fields have given me great perspective and interest upon understanding how the arts function from the Renaissance to Enlightenment period, building platforms through spirituality for the church, the individual and the state. I aim to continue redirecting the purpose of art by serving my community and constantly rediscovering my power in the world. This comes forward through my passion in working closely with LGBT youth and advocating for the liberation of black and brown people in the arts. I currently plan on taking a gap year and in the mean time working closely to build programming for LGBTQIA youth in the upstate of South Carolina.

My favorite memory at Furman thus far would have to be performing Richard Strauss's Death and Transfiguration with the Furman Symphony Orchestra on their Spring 2017 concert.

Matisyn Darby
Furman University 2020
A Tribute to Tom Buford

“Glorify God and Celebrate Life”
Tributes to Tom Buford

When it was clear that Tom was entering his last days, I reached out to the Furman Philosophy alumni and asked for them to send me memories of him that I could share with Tom and his family. I was flooded with tributes to his long and impactful life. Here, I have only been able to include just a few of these tributes (and even these are abridged due to space concerns). There are many, many more (that are being complied and turned into a memory book for the Buford family) but, I wanted to share just a few of these tributes with the entire Furman Philosophy community. When Tom requested that I lead his funeral ceremony, I asked him what the one message I should make sure is conveyed. He simply said, “Glorify God, and celebrate life.” Tom’s life exemplified those two ideals.

J. Aaron Simmons

Dr. Buford was kind. Whether that was his soft-spoken manner, his solicitousness, his patience or forbearing, I cannot say, but it was something I needed in my senior year with most of my college career fixed behind me for better or worse. Being around him at that pivotal time (for me) of “now what?” gave me a boost of confidence and the chance to believe in myself and my prospects, if only because he seemed to and likely did. That is how I have always remembered Dr. Buford. It is an unfolded debt of gratitude.

Mark R. Crosby
COO and General Counsel
One Surgical, Inc.
Furman c/o 1984

I was a Philosophy major at Furman and graduated in 1984. Dr. Buford was like a “father figure” and somebody you could talk with about any topic at any time. Today, I am Principal of The Charleston Catholic School (K-8 grades) in Charleston, SC. I approach my leadership style in adopting some of the qualities that Tom exemplified -- I try to be calm in tense / anxious moments during the school day; I try to be an attentive listener to my faculty, staff, parents and students; I try to be concise in my comments and lead by actions, not just words.

Fred McKay
Principal, The Charleston School
Furman c/o 1984

Professor Buford had compassion that was palpable and he showed me through his kindness to me during some difficult years what it means to have a heart that is merciful and that giving second, third and more chances is a sign of love and is in no way a weakness. God bless him.

H. Tod Taylor
Public Defender
Furman c/o 1987
Dr. Buford was a remarkably courteous teacher, just a true gentleman. I do remember him telling us that a person’s greatest strength was almost invariably his or her greatest weakness. The other thing I remember is that he came in with his hand bandaged – he had taken something that was on fire in his garage out of the garage before it could burn the whole house down. What I found remarkable was his sense of equanimity about burning his hand; there was absolutely no expression of even the slightest self-pity or bitterness.

Michael P. Williamson
Attorney at Law
Furman c/o 1978

I am crying as I write some of my fond memories of Dr. Buford as it is to his credit I even graduated from Furman! I was on academic probation in 1977; and I was about to get the boot when I wandered into Tom Buford’s office. After a lengthy conversation about “What is Philosophy?” I was sure I was in the right place! I told him I had been doing this all my life, I just didn’t know what to call it! I started immediately, and I aced every class I took except Logic, which I challenged the course and simply took the final with no classroom tutelage at all, and Metaphysics in my last term (in my mind I was already gone!). In fact, I have a letter from Paul Anderson (who was the Dean at the time) stating I was the first (and only at that time) person ever in Furman’s history to be on Academic Probation and the Dean’s List at the same time!

I. David Hilliard, CFS
Hilliard Financial Services

Tom was my professor when I majored in philosophy back at Furman from 67-71. I arrived on campus on an athletic scholarship and did not know what I was interested in for a major. Tom taught me the importance of asking “good questions” to which there are no definitive answers. I learned how to think from Tom, and eventually I relearned how to “think about thinking.” As a professor now, I implore my students to ask “good questions” of their clients—as good questions lie at the heart of psychotherapy. He helped me become interested in life, and Tom’s visage is forever implanted in my brain. I love the man.

Thomas Harrison, Ph.D., MFT
Professor, Counseling and Educational Psychology
University of Nevada, Reno
Furman c/o 1971

I will always remember Tom’s concern and kindness when my brother died suddenly in 1972, when I was a sophomore at Furman. On a more lighthearted note, I clearly recall asking Tom what he was having for lunch one day. He told me that he ate a can of tuna for lunch every school day, because it was cheap, easy and contained all needed nutrition. He’s a good man who made a difference in my life and the lives of many others.

Doug Williams
The Furman Co., Retired
Furman c/o 1975
A Tribute to Tom Buford

Professor Buford was the reason I chose Philosophy. He continued on as my mentor and counselor the rest of my time at Furman and beyond. His passion, ease of making me understand things and his kind heart has meant so much to me, then & now. Professor Buford, thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you represent. The good life isn't given, it's earned and you definitely have earned that good life. I hope I can "always" live up to your exceptional standards.

Norm Schaefer
Furman c/o 1985

I cherished the way in which all my professors at Furman challenged me to look inside to identify my passions and my weaknesses and approach the world to foster the former and improve the latter. While this happened in so many ways in each class, Dr. Buford's most lasting impression in this regard was captured in one fleeting statement during class that captured my attention and prompted me to stop him after class. While I cannot even remember the passage we were discussing (sorry Dr. Buford), I'll never forget his line, "There are two things I know for sure in this world, and one is that God is perfect." And that was it. When I approached him after class, I asked him what the other thing was he knew for sure. In that Dr. Buford way, he smiled and laughed a bit. "That I love my wife Dee more than anything in the world." I cannot fully express the immense impact of those two lines on my life. I remembered them through so many experiences and relationships, both good and bad. And when the day finally came that I found the woman God intended for me, I shared those lines from Dr. Buford with her in my wedding vows. To Dr. Buford, thank you for instilling those words in my heart and mind. You must have smiled when you heard a naive, inexperienced young man ask you that question. You must have also known that mine was the journey we all take, God willing, to come to those same deep life conclusions.

Sam Pearcy
Furman c/o 2007

An important thing Tom Buford taught me is that one should pursue the truth unwaveringly and honestly, without regard to fashionable preoccupations and with no indulgence granted to the trivial, for the truth—the truth that matters—can be revealed in unexpected shapes on unexpected byways.

Chris Williams
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy
University of Nevada, Reno
Furman c/o 1982

He had a way of listening and then making what sounded like casual remarks but were more often than not guideposts for building one’s own philosophical approach to living. “Take the time to stop and smell the roses,” he would remind me. I was always in such a hurry, and unfortunately that has not changed. Our world could use a remedial course from Dr. Buford right now. I hope to meet him in the next life and thank him for being my teacher, and I will ask him to smell the roses with me.

Garilou Page
Corporate Lawyer
Furman c/o 1979
A Tribute to Tom Buford

(continued)

Every now and then a professor comes along and by his teaching stretched me all out of my youthful proportions, and I never shrank back to my original dimensions. Dr. Tom Buford was such a man.

Stephen M Crotts
Carolina Study Center
Furman c/o 1972

Dr. Buford has left an indelible impression upon so many lives, not just with his teaching but also with his powerful positive example. As a pastor, I find myself talking about him regularly when anyone tells me they are too old to do something or they missed their chance at learning something new. I tell them how my college Philosophy professor told me that he started playing the cello on his 70th birthday and ended up playing in the symphony at 77! As a violinist myself I have always cherished that thought and would have loved to hear him play. I am grateful for the life and legacy of Tom Buford and how he forced us to think in his Philosophy of Religion class. Such "spiritual weightlifting" has proven to be fantastic preparation for ministry!

Brandon Berry
Class of 2005

Although I valued the philosophy degree, I had not been a very strong student. When I said this to Dr. Buford, he said that the philosophy I had experienced was in me and would emerge when the time was right, that I would remember when my life experience provided the setting to apply it. This was true! I have returned again and again to philosophical concepts from different viewpoints in time and especially to the essential experience of self-awareness.

Ellen Pais Randolph
Public Library Manager
Furman c/o 1988

Dr. Buford was my favorite professor at Furman. Not only did he help me love Philosophy but he also taught me some good life lessons that I have been able to pass along to others as well. I was not a Philosophy major nor was my husband, however we loved our first Philosophy class with Dr. Buford so much that we both took a second Philosophy class by him, and that is where my husband and I first met. Dr. Buford will always have a special place in my heart. When I ponder the good times and classes I had at Furman, I will always remember him. My husband (Vance Embry) and I will treasure the time we had with him.

Kelly McGuire Embry

As an undergraduate, I took Dr. Buford’s courses on aesthetics and ancient philosophy. I still recall fondly how he captured the ordinary relevance of Aristotle’s metaphysical conception of the recalcitrance of matter with a story of a home repair project that was not going as smoothly as hoped. That was one of the many instances in which his teaching had both a gentle humor and humanity. Tom always seemed to have the same youthful sense of curiosity—the sense of wonder in which Aristotle says philosophy begins.

Alan W. Grose, Ph.D.
Furman c/o 1992
I feel enormously indebted and grateful to Dr. Buford for his time, his care, and his touch on my life. Because of him, I believe I feel more deeply, see more truly, and love more selflessly than I ever could have.

Stephen Berrien Griggs
Furman c/o 2008

I wasn’t mature enough to appreciate Dr. Buford when I was his student. It was only later, after I had grown up a bit, that I came to value what he had taught me. He wasn’t the focus of our studies. He was leading his students through a thicket, but it was our journey to make, not his. He introduced us to the classics, and then he stepped out of the way. He exemplified the very best qualities of a teacher—nurturing and supportive, and yet willing to let his students grapple with the material on their own, willing to let us learn from our mistakes. I did not fully appreciate him at the time, but I appreciate him now.

Mike Martinez
Furman c/o 1984

I first met Dr. Buford in the spring of 1970. I was signing up for classes in the last term of my freshman year. Everywhere I looked, there were no openings. I came across the Philosophy table and sitting there was Dr. Buford. The only Philosophy course available was junior level. I had never taken Philosophy in my life. I was intimidated and scared. Dr. Buford smiled, with that signature twinkle in his eye, said, “Come on in, everything’ll be fine.” .....And it was. Dr. Buford became my teacher and mentor, not only for a Philosophy degree at Furman, but also throughout my life. He taught me more than I ever expected – answering my questions with questions that forced me to think, to discover answers and come to what appeared to be my own conclusions ....thinking in a way that has served me throughout my life.

John Weatherford
Furman c/o 1973

Dr. Tom Buford
"All The Fundamental Words Have Been Used Up" (Heidegger)

ALTERITY
ELLACURIA
INTENTIONAL
ONTOLOGICAL
SUPEREROGATORY
WELTANSCHAUUNG

BEING
FANON
MODUSTOLLENS
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Word Search Answer Key:

Furman University strives to develop in its students a passionate commitment to liberal learning. The Department of Philosophy is central to this endeavor. We seek to introduce students to the most important philosophical thinkers, movements, and texts in the history of philosophy and in the contemporary world, from both Western and non-Western perspectives. We do so with the aim of teaching students to be critical thinkers, inquisitive learners, clear writers, and engaged citizens.

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